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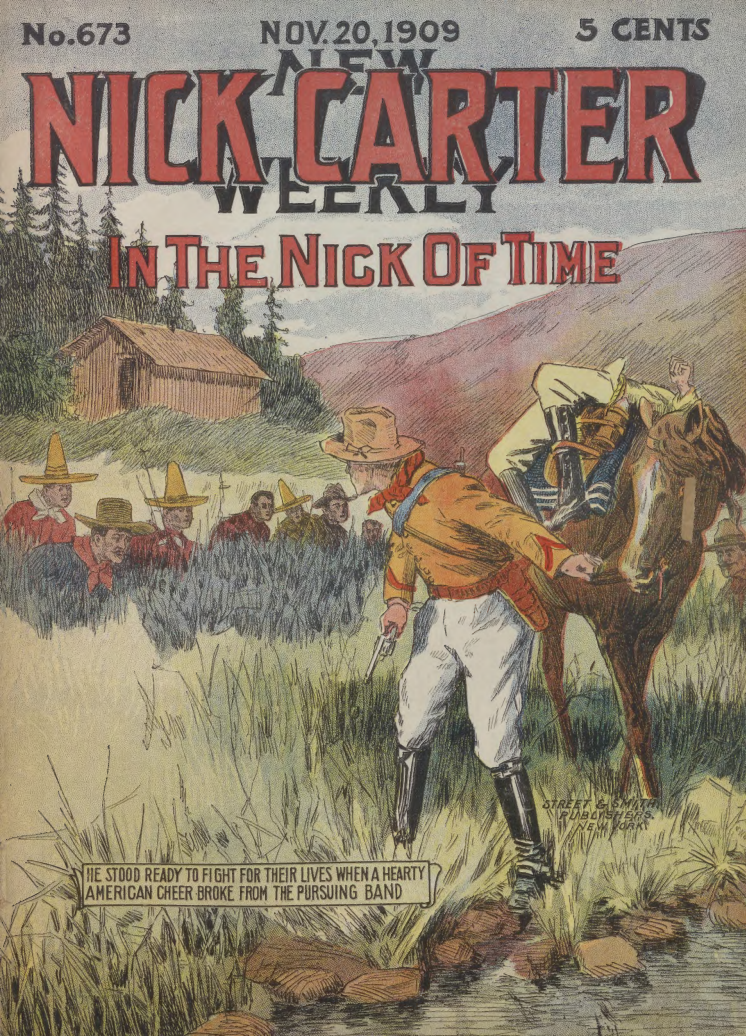
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

IN THE NICK OF TIME



HE STOOD READY TO FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES WHEN A HEARTY AMERICAN CHEER BROKE FROM THE PURSUING BAND

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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IN THE NICK OF TIME;

OR,

Carter Finishes the Feltman Syndicate.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNHAPPY GIRL.

"That girl looks unhappy to me, Nick."

The speaker was Chickering Carter, and he stood with his chief in the foyer of the Marathon Theatre, between the acts of the new play, "The Bone of Contention," which had opened an early season in August.

It was the initial performance, and although Nick Carter was not a confirmed "first-nighter," he had come to this opening for a distinct purpose. He had been told that a certain actress of ability played in "The Bone of Contention," a part in which, during one whole act, and part of another, she had to appear in men's clothes—and had played it so well at rehearsals that she had made those who saw her, marvel.

The act which had just closed was the "big" one, in which the disguised actress essays her difficult rôle and even Nick admitted that she did remarkably well. She was wise enough to walk about the stage very little, and then in short "laps." And the action called for her to back out of the set, holding the rest of the players on the stage motionless at the point of a pistol. The general effect was good.

But the lady of whom Chick had spoken was not on the stage.

After this act, Nick and his companion had left their box and strolled outside. They came face to face with a slim, light-haired girl—a pretty young women she was, with rather good color, a direct glance, a firm mouth and chin, and an upright carriage.

Being, light-complexioned she looked younger than she really was, for Nick knew her to be nearly, if not quite, thirty.

"Miss Arnot!" he said, when she smiled and offered him her hand. "I am pleased to meet you. You are well? Surely, it would be unkind to believe otherwise, when one looks at you. And your brother? Well, too? Am delighted to hear it."

The girl passed on, leaning on the arm of a well-dressed, elderly lady, whom Nick did not know. It was but a passing in the crowd, and there was no opportunity for introduction, although Chick already knew the young lady by sight.

Sadie Arnot was a distant relative of that Chicago promoter and millionaire, Philip Arnot, who had become somewhat notorious in his financial businesses within the past few years. Miss Arnot and her twin brother, Charles, who had served in the United States Army in the Philippines under the name of "Sergeant Charley Tonra," were the owners of the majority of stock in a gold mine in Wyoming which had long lain dormant.

This mine had been flooded, and it was believed that the gold vein had "petered out." The twins had only dreamed of its being of value. Finally there was some stir made by a syndicate of owners that held all the property about that particular mine.

Behind this syndicate, Miss Arnot found, was her wealthy relative, Philip Arnot, who had lately come to

New York to extend his operations. She came on to the metropolis, introduced herself to Mr. Arnot, and obtained a position with him as social secretary—and earned every penny of the money he paid her, too. For five months she worked for him.

Then the matter of the mine came to a head. Her brother, who had adopted the name of "Tonra" because he had disgraced himself in early life through his appetite for drink, was working in a Philippine show at Coney Island.

A representative of Philip Arnot went to him to try and get him to sell out his interest in the flooded mine. This representative was a young man of loose character, but some good parts, named Clarence Studiford.

When he could not get the self-styled "Tonra" to sell by fair means he introduced to him a certain Hester Street fence and pawnbroker named Jake Feltman, who offered to lend Tonra money on his shares.

Meanwhile Sadie Arnot had discovered that the syndicate could cheaply and easily drain the long-abandoned mine, and that the true vein of gold was to be traced into the old property. She and her brother wanted to raise money and develop the property themselves.

Feltman, however, got hold of the weak Charles Arnot, known as Sergeant Tonra, with the Philippine show, lured him away from his friends to an old house in the country, obtained his signature to bills of sale of the mine, and kept him intoxicated there.

The signature of his sister was just as necessary, however. Philip Arnot had acquiesced in his secretary being kidnapped, and Miss Arnot was lured away from the house and taken to her brother. It was then explained to her that if she would sign certain papers, she could have sufficient money to take her unfortunate brother West, out of temptation, and they could develop the mine upon their own capital.

Knowing that Nick Carter would be watching any public move he might make, Jake Feltman tried to play a trick on the wily detective.

It was arranged that Philip Arnot should go to Carter and report to him the disappearance of his secretary, Sadie Arnot, and engage him to find the girl. But Arnot acted oddly, and deliberately suppressed certain vital information regarding the matter, in the hope that Nick would refuse to investigate the case at all.

This, indeed, Nick was tempted to do; but he chanced to run into some small clues that interested him, and within twelve hours—the action of a single night—he unraveled the tangle of deceit, found the girl and her brother, made Jake Feltman disgorge the papers the intoxicated man had signed, grilled Philip Arnot on the fires of his scorn, gave Clarry Studiford an earful of good advice that young man was likely to follow, and placed the twin Arnots in possession of their mine again.

Since that time Nick had neither seen nor heard of the Arnots, brother and sister, until this evening at the theatre. The pretty, slight, young woman whose appearance had drawn Chick's comment as it is printed at the head of this chapter, was Miss Sadie Arnot.

"I am inclined to believe you are right, Chick," said his chief, in comment upon what his assistant had said. "And I am rather curious to know what it means. Although she and her brother have got their mine, I fancy it is not the easiest thing in the world to raise capital to work it when that syndicate of mine owners surrounds them like the salt sea around Ireland!

"They might pump out the mine under favorable conditions; but perhaps those conditions have not presented themselves. All Philip Arnot needed to have done, had he got hold of the twins' mine, was to open a tunnel and let the water run off into the unused workings of the lower mines. I fear Miss Arnot and her brother are up against it."

"What does Studiford say about them?"

"He is away, I believe. He did call on the girl until she rather discouraged him. I fancy Clarry Studiford is rather hard hit in that quarter; but his reputation is against him."

"I heard Studiford had gone West," said Chick reflectively.

"He was rather secretive. But I think the fellow is keeping straight. His interest in the Arnot girl has steadied him wonderfully. Hello! What's this?"

The two detectives had returned to their box. The curtain was about to rise on the last act. One of the ushers, just as the lights were lowered, parted the curtains at the back of the box and thrust a twist of paper into Nick Carter's hand.

The chief unfolded the paper quickly and managed to read, in the dim light, what was scrawled there by the pencil of Danny, his chauffeur. It said:

"Something doing, chief. There's a lady in the car says she must see you. I'm waiting at the corner of Seventh Avenue."

The violins rose in volume and the curtain began to roll up as Nick got on his feet. Chick started to follow him.

"Want me, chief?" he asked.

"Better stay and see the rest of the show, Chick," advised Nick Carter. "I'm as bad off as a physician; I can't even see a play without taking it in homeopathic doses. You stay and tell me how it ends."

So saying he left the box, and, with his coat over his arm, went out of the theatre.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLOTTERS AT WORK.

Now, no matter how keen of mind, and how observant a man may be, as long as he is man, he is not infallible. Nicholas Carter had gained—and well sustained—the reputation of being as alert and clear-headed as any of his contemporaries. But a man is bound to relax at times, and he went directly out

of the theatre, in answer to Danny's strange note, without once glancing behind him.

The house was dark, but in the foyer it was light. A few late returners were hurrying in, and Nick pushed through them and walked out of the house.

As a group of men divided to let him pass, one of the party noticed Nick's face, and immediately turned his own away. He was a short, rather stout individual, a Hebrew, wearing more jewelry than a gentleman could afford to display outside of a show window, and he had a furtive eye. He strolled away from the people he was with and followed Nick to the door.

The detective stepped out upon the side street, instead of leaving by the front entrance, and turned toward the darker Seventh Avenue. The man who had followed him took out his handkerchief and, standing under the glare of the arc light over the door, flirted the white linen and appeared to be removing the dust from his opera hat.

At once a figure lurking among the carriages across the side street, and opposite the theatre, started diagonally across the street and met the fat Hebrew in a dark corner, under the iron stairway of the fire escape beside the theatre building.

"That's him!" whispered the Jew. "See what's up."

The man he addressed was a thin, nervous, squint-eyed fellow, apparently young in years, but with a face that was completely evil. He leered, nodded, and giving the cap he wore a knowing twitch over his eye, set out rapidly in Nick Carter's wake.

Danny had been instructed to come to the theatre with the automobile for Nick and his first assistant, and the Irishman had evidently arrived ahead of time. But the note stated that the chauffeur had with him an unexpected passenger.

The detective's eyes, therefore, were turned eagerly toward the car which stood in sight at the corner of the avenue. He was not looking back. Besides, he would scarcely have noticed the lurking figure of the slim young man, unless he had some suspicion that he was being followed.

And on this evening Nick Carter felt particularly free and easy in his mind. No case that he chanced to have on hand was of a nature to cause the detective to look for any peril.

Danny had stopped the car at the side entrance of the theatre to send in his note. Now the car was halted against the curb, facing the crossing of Seventh Avenue, and the young Irishman's back was toward Nick, and his shadow, as they came from the theatre.

The back of Nick's touring car was so high that the detective could not see anybody in the tonneau until he was right beside it. Then he saw a slight, heavily veiled figure sitting in the farther corner.

Nick noticed that Danny had his motor running as though he were ready to start the car instantly. There was some reason for that that the detective did not understand, but he noted it. As Danny had come so early, and must have expected to wait until the show was out, he wouldn't have been likely to have his engine chugging away.

There was something peculiar about the female in the car. Danny evidently intended to start the moment Nick stepped in. Nick would not have been the wise man he was, had he not learned that sometimes it was best to accept a situation without question.

So, when he reached the car, he jerked open the door without hesitation and leaped into the tonneau.

"All right, Danny!" he said in a low voice.

Instantly the chauffeur turned a lever and the car grunted and began to roll away. The girl in the seat in front of Nick half rose from her position and looked back.

"Who was following you, Mr. Carter?" she whispered.

Following me?" returned Nick, really surprised by the question, and turning to flash a look behind him. "I really didn't know——"

The shadow had disappeared. Nick did not even get a fleeting glimpse of the thin young man who had been set on his trail by the Jew.

"I am sure somebody was following you," breathed the girl.

"You are positive as to that?"

"There can be no doubt of it, Mr. Carter."

"I guess he has given up the chase—or run for another car. We'll find out in a moment if we are followed. Danny, keep straight down the avenue for a time."

"He was a thin man, and he crouched behind you in the shadow," declared Nick Carter's passenger. "When you got into the car he seemed to throw himself forward—I don't know but he went into the gutter——"

"Perhaps he was intoxicated and pitched off the curbing behind the car," said the detective.

"No-o. I do not think so. But I admit I am nervous—very nervous—to-night."

"I noticed that you seemed unhappy and distraught at the theatre," said Nick quietly.

"Oh, Mr. Carter! you know me, then?" she cried.

"An automobile coat and veil are not an entirely successful disguise, Miss Arnot," returned the detective, laughing. "I know you."

"I hope that Feltman did not recognize me as easily," she said.

Nick pricked up his ears then.

"Do you mean that you saw Jake Feltman at the theatre?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Just as I came out."

"Tell me about it," said the detective.

"It was when I decided to leave Mrs. Emmerich—she is the lady where Charley and I board, and sometimes I think she watches me very closely. After we went back to our seats I excused myself, saying that I had dropped my handkerchief, and as it was a

monogrammed one, and valuable, I would go and report it at the cloakroom at once.

"I did go to the cloakroom; but it was to get my coat and hat. Before the curtain rose on the last act I was going out of the door. I meant to step into a near-by telegraph office and send you a message. I did not dare to do it from the house, and use an usher. I feared Mrs. Emmerich would see me, and, as I say, she seems to be curious about me."

"You mean she is watching you?" asked Nick.

"I have some reason to believe so."

"As a spy?"

"For other people, yes."

"Humph! Your old friends, Philip Arnot and Feltman?"

"I do not know about Mr. Arnot. But I have seen Feltman several times. And that is what I am getting at now. I saw him to-night."

"As you came out of the theatre?"

"Yes, Mr. Carter. He was in the foyer."

"I overlooked him," admitted Nick. "And so did Chick, I reckon."

"But I did not think he saw me. I ran out of the side door and your car was just coming along. I remembered the car, and your man. It was the one Mr. Studiford rode in one night, when he introduced you to me out beyond New Rochelle."

"It certainly is; and this is my man," said Nick.

"I thought of a better way of reaching you. I ran out to the automobile and told this man I wanted him to send in word for you to come out. I didn't have to tell him who I was; he seemed ready for any emergency."

"He's all of that," admitted Nick Carter, with a chuckle. "In fact, we call him 'Reddy' sometimes—but that's because of the color of his hair."

"Well, he sent in a scrap of paper by the usher, and I tried to make myself small in the car."

"And he reached me—and I am here."

"But that Feltman——"

"I did not see him," said Nick. "Perhaps I was followed from the theatre. But you say the man you suspected disappeared?"

"Just as you entered the car."

Nick had looked around several times. Danny had whirled downtown at a good speed, crossing Thirty-fourth and Twenty-third Streets at more moderate pace because of the crosstown cars—and the cops—and was now in the lower stretch of Seventh Avenue. There was no car trailing after them at all.

"I fancy we are not followed," said the detective.

"I am glad. Perhaps I am over-suspicious——"

"And why?" asked Nick. "I am glad you came to me if you need help, Miss Arnot; but I want to know all about it. No half truths with me, if you please. Consider me your family doctor, or father confessor. I am not to be put off with a part of a story. It must be all, or none."

"And you think I need that warning?" she asked.

"I think you are generally a very independent and self-sufficient young woman; therefore you are inclined to be secretive. I want you to give me all the returns if you expect a fair and impartial count in this matter."

She had looked away from him while he spoke; now she turned suddenly, and Nick could see the sparkle of tears on her eyelashes.

"I will speak freely to you," she gasped, with difficulty suppressing her sobs; "for I need help—just the help, perhaps, that you can give me. It—it is about my brother."

"You decided not to take him away from New York, after all?" suggested Nick.

"He—he would not go!" she exclaimed.

"No?"

"You see, we are not rich. Indeed, beside the mine, we have nothing. And of course I have earned nothing since I left Mr. Philip Arnot's employ. Charley insisted on going back to work in that horrid show down on the Island."

"Captain Jack McCormick's Philippine Village?" asked Nick.

"Yes. Not that Captain McCormick hasn't been as good as gold to us. He is a kind-hearted fellow, and he likes Charley. Not many employers would overlook my poor brother's fault."

"I take it, then, that your brother has not wholly broken away——"

"He is drinking," she interrupted flatly. "For months he did not touch an intoxicating drink. Then that Feltman made him take a drink to bind the bargain Charley thought he was making for the development of the mine. Since then he has been taking the stuff quite steadily, and it changes his whole nature. You know how liquor affects some people."

"I do indeed. It makes a devil of an angel, in some cases."

"He is not ugly with me," she said, quickly. "But he is obstinate. He will not give up the idea of raising money to start that old mine going——"

"Have you?" demanded Nick quickly.

"I do not have any hope of getting honest capital interested in our favor," declared the girl. "Everybody whom we have approached wants to 'hog it all'! That is not an elegant expression, but it is good Wall Street. Even Philip Arnot made me a proposition since I left him."

"He did?" cried Nick, surprised.

"Yes. He offered me back my job and a rather larger sum for our holdings than Feltman had been about to give us when you stepped in and saved us from losing the title to the property."

"And you refused?"

"There is a million in that old mine if there is a cent!" declared the young woman vigorously. "If Charley and I cannot realize it, I declare those robbers who own the property around us shall not have it."

"Offer it for sale in the open market," suggested Nick.

"Of what use would that be? Phil Arnot—and this Feltman, who seems to be right in with him—would gobble it up through some agent, or broker."

"For instance, Mr. Studiford?" suggested Nick, turning a keen eye on her.

The girl blushed, looked half offended for a moment, and then said:

"I suppose *that* is one of the things you might accuse me of suppressing. Mr. Studiford really seems repentant——"

"I have hopes of him myself," interrupted Nick.

"He seems determined to be my friend," said the girl, turning aside again. "He has really gone West now to personally examine the old mine and see what is being done on the grounds. He has broken with Philip Arnot entirely."

"Yes?"

"And if he does not get some information which may help us raise money I don't really see what we are coming to. If Charley could be assured that we could live comfortably away from New York, I think I could coax him to go with me. He would sell his right in the mine to-morrow, if he could do so.

"And that worries me, too," continued the girl. "I hate to lose the property; but I do not want to feel that I may lose my brother entirely. For years Charley has had these lapses. During one of them—or after a grand debauch, rather—he went into the army.

"Had he gone in with his own name, he would have been better off. We could have hoped to see him owning a commission and being an officer of some prominence now. But the masquerade had to be kept up, of course, and he could only rise to be sergeant.

"And you do not know how galling it is to me, Mr. Carter, to have him appear as he does in that Philippine show. Of course, he has kept away from our friends for years; but he looks so much like me that if any of the old home folks saw him that would be the end! They would carry the tale back, for they could not mistake Sergeant Tonra for anybody but Charley Arnot!"

"You have a good bit of pride, I see," said the detective.

"We all have—we Eastern Arnots. I do not know much about Mr. Philip Arnot's branch of the family," said the girl, with scorn.

"And might it not be that your pride is standing in your way now?" asked Nick.

"Perhaps! Yes, I suppose it is. I ought to have taken Charley right away from New York the very day you opened my eyes to the danger we were in. But I thought I could hold poor Charley for a little while, and I did not want to run away from Philip Arnot."

"But Feltman seems to be the person who hounds you?"

"I suppose he will do Mr. Arnot's dirty work."

"And he is quite capable of doing his own," said Nick thoughtfully. "You think that Feltman is hounding your brother, do you?"

"I believe he is trying to get hold of him. Captain Jack tries to look after Charley; but the minute he is out of the captain's sight, or away from me, somebody gets him to drinking. You see Charley, of his own volition, would never go in and take a drink. It takes a good deal of urging to get the first drink past his lips. I know that to be a fact. He can sit with a party of men who are drinking and never have a desire for the stuff; but if he is foolish enough to take a single sip, then he hasn't the strength to keep from drinking, and drinking, until he is helplessly intoxicated."

"Then you think there is somebody systematically tempting him?"

"I do. And I believe it is either that Feltman, or somebody in his confidence. Whenever I see Charley all he talks about is selling the mine. He wants me to agree to sell, as we cannot do better. And he is angry with me, for you see, neither of us can give title alone—unless the other dies. We are legally bound by that fact."

"I see," said Nick.

"And I know I am watched, too, by the plotters—whoever they may be. This Mrs. Emmerich is a very nice lady, and she is kind enough to chaperone me everywhere. But once I actually saw her riding in a cab with a man who was Feltman's double, if it was not the money lender himself.

"Even to-night, when I spoke to you in the theatre, she was 'all eyes and ears' on the instant. But I appear unnoticing. If I broke with her," said this wise young woman, "they might get somebody a deal more acute to watch me. I am not afraid of Mrs. Emmerich, at least!"

"And you feel now that you would like to have somebody's advice, or somebody's assistance?" asked Nick, smiling.

"Both, Mr. Carter. Self-sufficient as I am, I know that I need help now. I feel that these people are plotting against me; it makes me nervous and apprehensive. And I do not know how to meet them."

"You know the old rule about fighting fire, don't you?" demanded Nick Carter. "'Fight fire with fire' is a pretty good and safe rule. Setting 'back fires' will perhaps quench the efforts of these people who are after your mine, Miss Arnot. If you wish me to, I will make some investigations. If Mr. Arnot is inspiring this persecution we may even be able to influence *him*."

"I would not ask a favor of Philip Arnot for a million dollars!" cried the girl.

"Neither would I," returned Nick Carter, with a grim smile. "But perhaps I can find a way to influence him. Now, Miss Arnot, have you anything more to say to me at present?"

"I don't know, sir. I am afraid that I am taking advantage of your kindness. And it's utterly ridiculous for me to talk of money. I have none."

"If you ever develop your mine, and it proves to be a good thing, I'll send in my bill," said Nick cheer-

fully. "Now Danny shall run us back to the theatre. You will be in time to join your friend. Mrs. Emmerich, when she comes out."

He spoke to the chauffeur, who had been running slowly up Greenwich Avenue, having turned at the foot of Seventh Avenue. Danny therefore turned north when he reached Jackson Square.

As they turned the corner into Eighth Avenue, there was a shout from a group of people standing on the sidewalk. Danny instantly slowed down and stopped, and Nick and the girl sprang up to look behind them.

A man was sprawling in the gutter. Two or three bystanders started toward him.

"I swear I didn't knock that guy over, chief," declared the chauffeur.

Indeed, the fellow did not seem to be much hurt. He scrambled to his feet and looked about uncertainly for a moment. Then he grabbed up his cap, thrust it on his close-cropped crown, leered at the party in the automobile with squinting eyes, and shambled off through Thirteenth Street.

Miss Arnot clutched the detective's arm convulsively.

"That is the same fellow whom I saw following you when you joined us near the theatre!" she whispered.

CHAPTER III.

MR. PHILIP ARNOT ON THE GRILL.

On East Fifty-seventh Street, in a quiet block of residences built when Riverside Drive and the Heights were a goat-ridden wilderness of squatters' claims, Mr. Philip Arnot had leased a double house, and had lived there since his advent in New York from Chicago, now some three years back.

Nick Carter called there as early as eight o'clock the morning following the incident just related, for he knew the methods of work of the millionaire promoter. They were early risers at the Arnot house; Philip Arnot was at his desk before eight in the morning, and had done half his day's work when he started for downtown at ten or eleven o'clock. At least, that had been his system when Sadie Arnot was his private secretary, as the detective very well knew.

The man who came to the door in answer to Nick's summons was a strange footman, and he seemed there for the special purpose of keeping importunate visitors away from his master.

"Mr. Arnot niver sees gintlemin here on business," declared the footman, with an important wave of his hand. "It is a rule he niver breaks."

"Take my card in to him," said Nick, offering the pasteboard.

"It would be useless, sir," declared the flunkey. "I have me orders——"

A hand rested on his shoulder and turned him with firmness into the house.

"Go about your business, Phineas," said the butler, Marchant, who knew Nick well. "This is Mr. Carter. He is an exception to any rule!"

"Ah, Marchant, you are still with Mr. Arnot?" said the detective, with a chuckle, as he entered the house. "I fancied he could scarcely do without you."

"Nor could I bring myself to leave him," admitted the butler, who had before this worked against his master's interests, but openly and honestly. "I asked Mr. Arnot if he wished me to go, and he was kind enough to say no, that he was glad to have at least *one* honest person about him. It was exceedingly complimentary, Mr. Carter."

"I am glad you took it that way," said Nick. "And Mr. Arnot is right. Now, can I see him?"

"He is in the study. I will take you up at once. But whisper! how is Miss Sadie? Do you know? I have never seen her since she left here, and Mr. Arnot has another home secretary—a Jewish girl that I do not fancy much."

Nick nodded and followed the butler upstairs, informing him by the way that Miss Sadie was in very good physical health. At the door of the study Marchant merely knocked and left the detective to answer the summons to enter, by going into the room unannounced.

The first person Nick noticed as he opened the door was a dark-faced, sharp-looking young woman who sat at the table which had previously been Miss Sadie Arnot's desk. When Arnot wheeled in his chair and recognized the visitor, he nodded to the Jewess, and she arose and softly departed, but favored Nick with several very sharp glances.

"Well, Carter, this is an unexpected call," said the millionaire brusquely. "After what had passed between us I never expected to have an interview with you again."

"And don't think for a moment that I look forward to the meeting with pleasure," returned Nick, smiling grimly. "As I told you before, sir, I do not consider you in my class."

"You were beastly frank, I remember," grunted Arnot.

"Very true. You would not care to have me cover my feelings for you, sir. But be assured that my present visit is of importance, or I should not have ventured."

"Oh, I'm sure of that!" admitted the man.

"And unfortunately," said the detective, eying the Westerner with a glance that did not waver, "the topic I must discuss with you I really thought had been quite closed as far as you were concerned."

"What's the matter?—sorry you refused my thousand-dollar fee that time, Carter?" and Arnot chuckled scoffingly.

"I always have excellent reasons for refusing a fee," returned Nick placidly. "I had them in your case."

"Looking for more than a thousand now?" suggested the other, with deliberate intention, it seemed, to anger his visitor.

This was a large contract for Mr. Philip Arnot to undertake, however. Few men had as good control of their temper as did Nick Carter. He merely smiled disdainfully.

"I venture to say that you are forewarned of my intervention for a second time in the affairs of your ex-secretary, Miss Sadie Arnot?" remarked Nick.

To his own surprise the man before him looked up with evident interest in his eyes—interest that was bred of real astonishment.

"You've got me guessing, Carter," he said. "What's the matter with Sade now?"

"You haven't communicated with her since she left your house?"

"Of course I have. I tried to get her back."

"And tried to get her mining holdings at your own price, too?" said Nick.

"Of course. That was business."

"Is it business to hound that fool brother of hers to a drunkard's grave for the sake of the money there may be in that mine?" shot back Nick.

"What do you mean?"

Arnot's brow was knitted, and he half rose from his chair, on the arms of which his hands clinched tightly.

"You know very well what your helpers tried to do with Charles Arnot. Evidently they are using the same tactics now."

"My helpers?"

"Studiford and Feltman before; perhaps it is Jake Feltman alone now," said Nick firmly.

"Perhaps it is," said Arnot, sinking back into his chair, and gaining control of himself. "You are laboring under a delusion, Carter. I always did think your powers of perception were much overrated."

"Thanks. I am free to confess that I think so myself," said Nick, laughing.

"You are barking up the wrong persimmon tree now, at least."

"Indeed?"

"That's right. What Feltman and Studiford did before to that stew, Charlie Arnot, was without my sanction. But that doesn't matter. It's past and gone. And what they may do to him now does not interest me a particle!"

"I suppose not!" cried Nick. "You've given them carte blanche to go ahead, I suppose?"

"I've given them nothing. But I've *sold* Feltman something," admitted Arnot.

"How's that?" said Nick, beginning to see a light.

"Jake Feltman came to me and made an offer for certain shares I held in a mining syndicate. That was the company I organized to work that group of mines surrounding the property held in the main by Sade and her rummy brother. I sold out to Jake——"

"For how much?" interposed Nick. "I happen to know that your syndicate represented something like a million and a half of capital."

"Hang it! That's what puzzles me. Of course, Jake is nothing but an East Side pawnbroker; but that chap has made a lot of money somewhere. There may be somebody big behind him. But I sold because I thought it was going to cost too much to suck the orange dry."

"In other words, to get the keystone mine away from that brother and sister?"

"Huh! You have a nasty way of putting things, Carter. That's what I don't like about you."

"You're at liberty to your opinion—and I have mine about you, you know," said Nick coolly.

"Depend upon it, it doesn't make you friends," grumbled Arnot. "Well, I admit I couldn't see my way clear to carrying out the first plans of the combine, as I had made them. I was ready to renig. I didn't mind losing a bit in getting out in Feltman's favor, either."

"Now, see here, Arnot, I am not playing a game of bluff," said Nick, with emphasis. "I want the straight talk from you."

"This is straight."

"You mean that you have no part and interest in this syndicate that is trying to get the mine away from Sadie Arnot and her brother?"

"You've said it!"

"If I find you have tried to deceive me I shall open the matter of your conniving with Feltman to kidnap and cheat Miss Arnot, with the district attorney. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!" declared Nick, rising to depart.

"I haven't smoked a pipe since I worked as a section hand on the railroad," declared the millionaire. "But here's a good cigar—have one, Carter?"

"I'll smoke with you, Mr. Arnot, when I am quite convinced in my own mind that it is not your influence which is making your poorer relatives trouble," returned Nick sharply, and he left the room.

In the hall he found the young Jewess near the study door, and he favored her with a sharp glance. She demurely dropped her gaze and went into the room again.

Nick said to the butler, who waited for him in the lower hall:

"Where did your master pick up his new secretary, Marchant?"

"I believe she is a niece of a Mr. Feltman who has come here on business at times," said the old man.

"Humph!" muttered Nick, as he strolled out upon the street. "It's a hundred to one shot that Arnot is lying like a pirate—like the pirate he is! But if it is so, I'll surely make him all the mess with the district attorney that I can."

He turned west on leaving the house, but had not gone many paces when he met a man face to face who stopped before him with a letter held toward the detective.

"You are Mr. Nick Carter. You have just called at the home of Mr. Philip Arnot. Your business was regarding the young woman who once worked for Mr. Arnot, and who was once kidnapped. This letter is for you."

These sentences, repeated evidently by rote, and with a wooden expression of countenance, secretly amazed Nick Carter immensely for the moment. But while he hesitated to take the letter which was thrust toward him, he was mentally figuring out who the man was, and what the incident meant.

Then, of a sudden, he remembered Mr. Raphael Bobbins, and recognized the wooden-faced man before him as a footman who had ushered him into the house at 326 some weeks before. While making his investigations regarding the disappearance of Sadie Arnot, Nick Carter had become acquainted with a very strange and unfortunate cripple living on this street—one in whom he had taken a decided interest.

The strange being, who was called by the servants of the house "Mr. Raphael," was forty-odd years of age, was handsome—indeed, of striking appearance—possessed the torso, arms, and vigor of a well-grown athletic man, but lacked any lower limbs at all.

Nature had failed to give him legs. His feet—which were supple and almost as useful to him as his hands in quiet pursuits, were fastened to Mr. Raphael's body by short "duck-legs"—like an ankle. He had lived in an apartment in his father's house, which was decorated with barbaric splendor, for more than twenty years; and he had never left the room in that time!

Nick Carter, his first surprise passed, and understanding the queer humor of the cripple, took the letter, but did not open it. He saw that the footman had been disguised in rough clothing, and made to look as much as possible like anything but a house servant.

The man came, however, of that class of English peasantry that seem to have served for so many generations that the marks of their servility cannot be erased. Out of a crowd of beggars Nick would have picked him for what he was!

With a suddenly twinkling eye, the detective said: "Thank you for bringing me this letter from Mr. Raphael; but I will see him personally. Will you lead the way, my man?"

Evidently the fellow saw nothing surprising in this. He bowed deferentially, turned on his heel, and led the way directly to the steps of No. 326 which he mounted ahead of the detective.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VIBRAPHONE.

When the disguised footman touched the button at the door of the Bobbins house, another manservant opened. He made no comment upon his brother servitor's appearance, or on the fact that Nick entered at his heels.

The man who led the detective looked back at him once, bowed, and came to the door of the apartment in which the strange cripple spent his entire life. He knocked, and the latch of the door clicked—evidently released by the occupant of the room.

Again the marvelous marble mantelpiece, the tapestry hangings, the bric-à-brac, the polished parallel bars overhead on which the strange being took his wild, half-mad "exercises"—again these things were revealed to Nick under the soft light of the globes set in the high, arched ceiling.

"Ah, you Blunderbore!" exclaimed the resonant voice of Mr. Raphael.

He looked up from his book where he perched in his chair behind the great carven table, and shook a long finger at the footman.

"What an idiot you are! Did you think you could disguise yourself in those garments, and still keep your face in the expression of a smug grave-robber? Pah! go about your business, do!"

"Yes, sir!" replied the footman meekly, and went out.

When he was gone the creature laughed in an elfin note, and his eyes danced in glee.

"How funny!" he exclaimed. "Wasn't it a burlesque? I thought I should have died when the fool asked me if he should not put on some old clothes when he approached you, so that you would not suspect him of coming out of any neighboring house. Did you read the letter? No, you didn't! Of course, you knew that fool at once, Mr. Carter?"

"What is it, a joke?" asked Nick, not very much amused, for he did not think it would be well to encourage this queer creature in his impish, irresponsible tricks.

"It is private information. It bears on the very thing you are engaged in now, Mr. Carter. Ha, ha! Didn't I tell you that I managed to find out most everything?"

"And didn't I tell you that it was beneath a man of your intelligence to play monkey tricks?" demanded Nick, somewhat harshly.

"You are not complimentary," said Raphael sulkily.

"Of course I'm not. And therefore you do not like me. That's human nature for you!"

"There speaks true philosophy!" cried Raphael, clapping his hands, and quite unruffled again. "I can forgive much—in a philosopher."

"And I can forgive much—in a fool!" returned Nick tartly.

He had broken the seal of the envelope, and now drew forth some flimsy sheets of paper. They looked something like the telegraph forms on which newspaper intelligence is written at the W. U. and Associated Press offices, to send to the various papers in duplicate.

The writing on the sheets was by typewriter, yet it was done by no machine that Nick had ever come across before. He knew pretty thoroughly the different makes of American typewriters and their distinctive peculiarities of print—and of some English machines, as well.

The entire face of each sheet was blurred as though

from the ribbon, or from a carbon. And here and there the letters and words were merely blurred patches.

For instance the top page of the manuscript, or whatever it was, was only readable in part, and as follows:

* * * * * Game isn't worth can * * * you * * * cold * * * too easy. I * * * never say die. * * * * * Right; but show me. I'm from Missouri. I thought you was from Chicago? * * * * Get busy! * * * * * * * I kish clo'! I kish clo'! * * * * * I'll do nothing like * * * I told you that before. As far as I'm concerned, Sade shall be let alone—I mean it. * * * * * * You Western men are so chivalrous. * * * * * Millions! Swe-e-et watermillions! Ten cents! * * * * No, I tell you. Can't you take no for * * * * * * * * Buy me out? You! * * * * Millions! Watermillions! * * * * * Hi, lady! Want any millions? * * * * * * I thought you were * * * * * I can do it. I'll prove it to you! Mr. Arnot * * but you see, Feltman, I had never thought * * * * * without their holdings, Mr. Arnot, you can do nothing. And you say you will go * * * * * I mean it, too! Well, I'm not squeam * * * sell your stock to me and * * * * * * * * come on into the house. We can't talk * * * Here in peace. * * * * * Blackber-r-rs! Nice blackber-r-rs! R-ripe termatoes!

This was the page of gibberish that Nick Carter scanned, almost while he was having his little game of repartee with Mr. Raphael. He had shuffled the sheets of "flimsy," found that there were six of them, and that they were numbered, beginning with the bottom one. He really had looked over the last, or sixth, sheet.

"Well, Mr. Nicholas Carter!" ejaculated the strange cripple, "read me the riddle! What do you think of it, eh? You are so acute—you are so keen of perception. Let me hear what you say to that——"

"Give me chance to speak, will you?" returned Nick roughly.

"Well!" said the legless one, unabashed. "Speak!"

"This is the transcription overheard by some means, I suppose. It is one of your attempts to show yourself to be smarter than the dummies around you. If you were out in the world, Mr. Raphael, you would see how puerile and foolish such child's tricks are."

He was sorry the next moment that he had said this. Raphael fell back in his chair, and, closing his eyes, moaned a little. All the fire and excitement went out of his face. Instead of his countenance seeming cunning and not a little malicious, it was now a mask expressing nothing but sorrow and shame.

"Don't you suppose, Mr. Nicholas Carter, that I know, better than anybody else, how different I am from my fellows?", he asked, without opening his eyes. "Ay, I have no fellows! I am a creature apart. My only proper associates are in circus side shows. I am a *freak!*"

"Well, well!" said Nick, more kindly. "Then why not try to control these freakish tricks of yours? Make a better impression on folks."

Mr. Raphael drew himself up again, and now he opened his eyes, and a little smile began to tremble about his lips.

"It is my recreation to mystify the clods about me. And I do mystify them."

"You do not mystify me," said Nick succinctly.

"Ah! you have guessed only part of the thing," cried Mr. Raphael eagerly, recovering wholly now his former manner, so volatile was he.

"As far as I have gone, then, what I said was so?" asked the detective.

"Yes."

"This is a conversation overheard by you——"

"No, no!" cried Raphael. "Caught by my ingenuity, however. It is a transcription of what was caught by the delicate mechanism of my vibraphone, during an exposure of some fifteen minutes, one morning a fortnight ago."

"A conversation held in the street, of course," said Nick Carter, without betraying all the interest he felt. "I apprehend that part of the words here are the cries of street hucksters."

"That is so."

"You have been listening, as well as watching, your neighbors, Mr. Raphael," said the detective.

"True. But I have been listening mechanically. I have invented a machine that listens, and records, and reproduces—my vibraphone is a greater marvel than the camera obscura that mystified you when you were here before."

"You take too much for granted when you think I was mystified," returned Nick carelessly. "I tell you, these things are beneath you, Raphael."

"Well!" cried the misshapen creature, in final desperation, "are you not interested in this thing at all?"

"Somewhat—if you will tell me about it calmly."

"I'll do better," cried the legless man. "I'll introduce you to the workings of my most recently perfected invention. I say perfected; but, of course, nothing is really perfect in this mundane realm. For instance, the manuscript you have in your hands, which I took down literally from the record of the vibraphone, shows that the record missed a whole lot of words and sounds. Some of the sounds recorded were merely the rattle of wheels, whistling, hammering on an adjacent house that is being repaired, and so forth. These noises could not, of course, be translated into understandable terms.

"Now attend," said the eager little man, who had hopped down from his seat and waddled across the room to where one of the shuttered and heavily draped windows seemed to have something like a "piano-player" built into it. It was a polished case of wood, made to match the beautiful furniture. He unlocked it with a golden key.

The walls of this house were very thick, for it was built when the citizens of Manhattan put plenty of

brick and brownstone into their dwellings. The windows were therefore deep, and although this wooden case thrust itself into the room for some two feet, the main portion of the hidden mechanism was built into the window "seat."

About all that Nick Carter could see when Raphael climbed to the seat before the instrument were several cranks and levers, and an odd little typewriter at one side. There were the ordinary tubes of a phonograph, with a head attachment to hold the disks, or transmitters, in the ears, and a rack of phonograph rolls and a small aluminum horn affixed in the front of the case.

Raphael, with a mysterious smile, opened a little door and slipped in place one of the cylinders. Then he wound the mechanism, and there was a low, grinding noise from within the cabinet.

"Notice, if you please, Mr. Detective, the fact that in this room not the slightest street sound is audible. If you should notice this window from the sidewalk you would see that the entire lower sash is removed and that a fine screen covers the opening. This screen hides, too, the mouth of the vibraphone horn and mechanism which catches the vibrations of every noise for a radius of many yards.

"Come!" continued Raphael, hopping down from his perch, and starting for the dark room in which his camera obscura was arranged. "Let us see who is passing now. That cylinder will run for fifteen minutes."

Quite curious, after all, Nick accompanied him into the closet and again looked into the reflector of the camera obscura. He could see clearly a portion of the street before the house, and noted everybody and everything that passed.

A street sweeper stopped, leaning on his broom, and spoke to a policeman who strolled past. A huckster came by, following a wagon load of vegetables, and evidently, by his facial contortions, shouting his wares in a tone to make the anti-noise society sit up and take notice!

A couple of small boys rolled their hoops past the house, with apparent shoutings, although not a sound could Nick hear. The various figures in the panorama flitted by like ghosts.

"When I can combine my vibraphone with this, I shall be satisfied," said the legless man, with a sigh. "I told you it was inordinate curiosity that started me to work on this instrument. But I found that to only see people pass and repass, and stop and talk, and all that, was simply an aggravation.

"For instance, I have a neighbor—a horrible old brute! How any woman—and a pretty woman at that," snarled Raphael, "could ever marry the dog, I can't understand! At any rate, when they go out they are always quarreling. Once they stopped right in front of my door, and for five minutes argued. He seized her arm and almost shook her, he was so angry. Wasn't that tantalizing," queried this strange creature. "I was determined, after that, to be able to hear something of what people said whom I watched pass. Now, come! let us take out that cylinder and hear what the street sweeper and the officer said."

They went back to the strange machine built into the window seat. Raphael stopped the mechanism and shifted the cylinder to the transmitter, and nodded for Nick to take the ear tubes.

"Now you will hear what the White Wing said to the man in blue," declared Raphael, with childish delight.

He started the machine again. Nick was first conscious of a buzzing in his ears, then erratic and uncertain sounds. He thought he distinguished the rattle of wheels; then a voice—rasping and guttural—spoke:

"'Lo, Benjie! How's the missus?"

This was comparatively clear, although Nick realized that all the time there were other and confusing sounds being repeated by the phonograph. The second voice had not been recorded so well:

"* * * nasty cold. * * * all right. How's * * * *"

"Bully!" said the first speaker.

Then the further remarks of the two were drowned out by the raucous shouting of the vegetable peddler who had passed. Then the listener could distinguish the shouts of the small boys playing in the street. Really, the cylinder had recorded little of value.

"How did you come to catch *that* conversation?" demanded Nick, pointing to the manuscript that had been sealed in the letter.

"Ah, ha!" cried the legless man, delighted with the success of his plaything. "You are curious now, are you, Mr. Nick Carter? Well, I will tell you. I chanced to have the machine working—the vibraphone, as I call it—when two men whom you know, and whom I have often seen, came by. Rather, they met out here, the Jew evidently bound for the house of my wealthy neighbor, Mr. Arnot.

"I saw them in the dark room, of course. So I kept the vibraphone running as long as they remained near. Then I carefully translated as much as the vibraphone caught. And, if you like, I will show you the paper on which I have endeavored to fill in the blanks and breaks in their conversation."

"Let me see what you made of this last page—the one numbered six," said Nick grimly. "That will be sufficient."

Nodding his head wisely, the little man waddled to his desk chair, swung himself into it, and drew some papers out of his private drawer. One of these he selected and handed to Nick.

In spite of himself, the detective was surprised—and showed it—at the ingenuity displayed by the dwarf in filling in the openings in the strangely recorded conversation between the two men. Raphael had eliminated the street cries and had restricted himself to the words of the Jew and the millionaire promoter.

"I've made the following translation:"

"Mr. Arnot—I have made up my mind that the game isn't worth the candle.

"The Jew—Oh, you get cold feet too easy. I believe a man (or one) should never say die!

"Mr. Arnot—That's all right; but show me. I'm from Missouri.

"The Jew—I thought you was from Chicago? Ha, ha!

"Mr. Arnot—(He does not appreciate joke.) Get busy! (Tell me your plan, or words to that effect.)

"The Jew—(Evidently he proposes something distasteful to Mr. Arnot.)

"Mr. Arnot—I'll do nothing like that! I told you that before. As far as I am concerned, Sade shall be let alone—I mean it!

"The Jew—You Western men are so chivalrous. (Repeats his proposition again, possibly in other words.)

"Mr. Arnot—No, I tell you. Can't you take no for an answer?

"(The Jew makes further propositions, including the suggestion that Mr. Arnot sell his interest in whatever thing they were discussing.)

"Mr. Arnot—What do you mean? Buy me out? You! * * * I thought you were bluffing. How will you do it?

"The Jew—I can do it. I'll prove it to you, Mr. Arnot.

"Mr. Arnot—But you see, Feltman, I had never thought of selling out.

"The Jew—(He speaks of some third party—evidently interested in same financial matter as Arnot and the Jew.) Without their holdings you can do nothing. And you say you will go no farther.

"Mr. Arnot—I mean it, too!

"The Jew—Well, I'm not squeamish. Sell your stock to me and * * * * *

"Mr. Arnot—Come into the house. We can't talk things over here in peace.

"What do you think of it, Mr. Carter?" demanded the dwarf eagerly. "You see, I—I knew you were interested in those two parties——"

"How did you know it?" asked Nick, eying him keenly.

At that Raphael laughed cunningly again. "Ah! even you will begin to admit finally that I am a wonder."

"Don't try to fake me, Raphael!" commanded the detective. "This is not the first conversation you have recorded between these worthies. Am I not right?"

The dwarf's face fell. He said sullenly:

"How well you guess, Mr. Carter! I did find some conversation relating to yourself on a former record. I remembered the men who passed, and identified the speakers as Arnot and this Hebrew. The latter said you had bested him again, but that he would beat you out some time, if it took every dollar he owned."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nick, with relief. "Now I begin to understand."

CHAPTER V.

DUTCH PETE.

The information contained in the sheets of record from what Raphael called the "vibraphone" was not particularly vital to Nick Carter's inquiry, saving in one particular. The detective had very much doubted whether Philip Arnot had told the truth when he stated that he no longer held stock in the mining syndicate that wished to own the property now belonging to the Arnot twins.

It looked as though he might have sold out to Jake Feltman. It was really the Feltman Syndicate now, and Nick was sure that, this being so, no means—no matter how foul—would be overlooked by the plotters to gain possession of the flooded mine.

Nick, of course, understood every word of the conversation that Raphael had recorded, whether the dwarf did or not. The fact that Nick Carter's name had been mentioned by the two men before his door was what had interested Raphael in the affair.

"Now, Mr. Detective," said the queer being, cocking his head on one side and perching on the edge of his chair like an old owl on a dead tree branch, "what do you think of my invention? Is it not wonderful?"

"It certainly is not wonderful," returned Nick grimly.

"Heh? How's that?" cried Raphael, his voice growing sharp with anger.

"You have applied other men's ideas to this thing and have originated nothing at all. Your 'vibraphone' is far from perfect. If you could sift and classify the sounds which it records, and so give them all clearly and in proper sequence in their transmission, that would be an invention of some worth. You have merely arranged something which enables you to eavesdrop—and an eavesdropper without good cause is a most destestable person."

"You speak harshly to me, Mr. Carter," said the dwarf sullenly.

"I do. You have brains. You are perverting your powers. You may even have inventive faculty of a high order. Why do you not put your time, and brain, and money into work that will be of real value to the world? These are the playthings of children, not of grown men."

"Ah! you want me to do something great?"

"No. For the man who tries to do something great usually succeeds in being a great failure only! Try to do something of value to the human race."

"Wait! I am studying aviation," declared Raphael eagerly. "Suppose I should invent an air-sailing machine that would distance all those in existence now?"

Nick laughed. "There are almost as many men working at air ships as there are would-be playwrights on Broadway," he said.

"You have no confidence in me at all!" cried Raphael. And he really seemed deeply hurt.

Nick drew from his pocket a little flat disk, around

the edge of which showed the bright heads of several sizes of pins. He drew forth one of these and offered it to the legless man.

"There, Mr. Raphael," he said earnestly. "If you will invent and give to the world something only half as useful as that little thing, mankind will be benefitted far more, and be more grateful, than as though you built the greatest air ship that will ever sail the ether."

Raphael took the pin and held it on his palm a moment, looking down upon it with a chapfallen look. Suddenly, however, he glanced up at the detective again, and his eyes snapped with malicious mischief.

"And how about the man who invented the pin, Mr. Carter?" he cried. "Does the world remember him? Do you remember even his name yourself?"

The detective had to burst out laughing then.

"You've got me there, I admit, Raphael!" he said. "Nevertheless, the value of the comparison holds good. The pin is of greater worth than the air ship."

He bade his strange little acquaintance adieu, and from his residence went straight home, where he had reason to believe that he would have an early visitor.

Nick had made up his mind that Jake Feltman was watching him as closely as he watched Sadie Arnot. He was pretty sure that, on the night before, his conversation with Miss Arnot had been overheard by some henchman of the Jew pawnbroker.

The man that Miss Arnot had seen following Nick as he approached the automobile in which she had waited for him really flung himself on the car, under the crush-back hood, and had lain there and probably overheard most of the conversation during the ride down Seventh Avenue and up Greenwich Avenue.

At Thirteenth Street he had tumbled off his insecure perch; but he had heard enough to put Jake Feltman wise to the fact that Nick Carter was likely to take up the cause of the Arnot twins again, and to put him on his guard.

The plotters being so watchful—so much on their guard—Nick Carter jumped to a conclusion that was more than likely to be correct. He believed that Feltman, and whoever was in the plot with him—whether it was Philip Arnot, or others—was about ready to strike.

In other words, their plans were fully matured to obtain possession of the mine now controlled by the Arnot twins. Of course, that was to be done, in some way, by controlling the brother, whose unfortunate appetite for liquor put him in their power.

Through Charles Arnot they would probably try to control Sadie. Just how they proposed to use the weak young man to this end was the point that Nick Carter wanted to get at now. He did not believe that they would try kidnapping the girl a second time.

There was a way, the detective knew, to get at some idea of what Feltman was about. He had at his beck and call a number of crooks, for he was necessary to them in disposing of their loot. Put the pawnbrokers of New York out of business, and half the burglaries will not occur. That statement is not meant to reflect upon those pawnbrokers who are law-abiding.

Jake Feltman's place on Hester Street had become notorious, and his dealings with both disreputable politicians and with thieves gave him a backing that would stand for almost anything the "fence" wanted done.

Heretofore Nick Carter had used one of Jake's own tools in bringing about the Jew's undoing. The detective had influence with a fellow named Dutch Pete, who sometimes did rough work for the fence and pawnbroker, and it was Dutch Pete whom Patsy Garvan, Nick's young assistant, introduced into the study of the detective a few minutes after Nick's own return from his visit to Philip Arnot, and his meeting with Mr. Raphael Bobbins, the legless marvel.

Dutch Pete, who was a stocky, yellow-haired man, with a red face and a bristling yellow mustache, came into Nick's presence with diffidence, cap in hand. He had seen with covetous eyes the marks of wealth and good taste in the furnishing and adornment of the detective's house; and, in addition, he had come here really against his will.

"Here's this gun, Nick," said Patsy. "I think we'd better have put the nippers on him and carried him to headquarters. He really objected to coming when you took the trouble to send a car for him."

"Vell, I ain't anxious fer no ottermobile ride mit no cops yet," growled Pete.

"Afraid some of your swell friends might see you and you'd be disgraced, heh?" suggested Patsy, laughing.

"Suah! Anyvay, some of de poys might t'ink I vas snitchin' on 'em. Chee! I had trouble enough mit Shake de time you helped me rob his old store, Misder Carter." And the thief grinned at the remembrance of an occasion when Nick Carter had rescued the Dornay emeralds from the clutches of the Hester Street fence.

Nick had passed Patsy a signal to go behind the screen which masked the farther end of the room, and get ready to take down any part of the conversation between himself and Dutch Pete that the chief should consider advisable. Patsy ostensibly left the room by the door leading into the hall.

"Suah, you got a fine blace here, Misder Carter," said Dutch Pete, staring at the silver ornaments on the desk table behind which Nick sat.

"You have been more used to seeing such things by the uncertain light of a bull's-eye, eh?" asked Nick grimly.

"Eh, eh? Vell, you dond't expect me to incriminate myselluf py answering dot, do you?" demanded Pete, grinning again.

"Not much, Pete! But there is something about which you have got to be frank with me. You understand that?"

"Oh, golly! you vill get me into trouble mit dot Shake Feltman—I know idt!"

"Well, you can break with him any day you like, as

I've told you before, and I'll stake you to enough to get you out of town and a good bit away from the Jew's clutches. But it isn't in you to be decent, Pete; and you'll always have a master. If it isn't Jake, it would be some other smarter criminal."

"Dot's de t'ing I like about you, Misder Carter," declared the Dutchman. "You speak so blain mit me."

"You like me a fat lot, Pete. I know what you'd do to me if you dared. But you know I've treated you square all the time. Just the same, as long as you are working with Jake Feltman, you have got to tell me as much as you know about his business. And if you don't tell me the truth in every particular, you know I have other ways of finding out!"

"Suah! suah! I know apoudt idt," hastily declared the thief. "I know on vich side of mein pread is de putter—suah."

"See that the butter side doesn't fall to the floor, then," observed Nick grimly.

"But if Shake ever findt out vot I dit apoudt dot string of emeralds—— Ach!" Pete lost the power of expression here, but rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"Therefore," said Nick, without mercy, "as you do not wish him to learn your part in the disappearance of those gems, you are going to tell me what I want to know."

"You haf me petween de ubber undt de neider millstones," groaned Pete, shaking his head mournfully.

"You'll talk, then?"

"Suah! Dond't I haf to?" demanded the man impatiently.

"All right. You remember the girl that came out of town there to the old house where you hang out mostly?"

"Ugh! Undt you are watching dot house?" cried Pete.

"Never mind about that. I know what I know. As long as you act square with me you will not get into trouble over it. Come! about the girl?"

"I remember her—suah! She came to see the lobster that we had there."

"Her brother—yes. Do you know what Jake intends regarding her?"

"No!" declared Pete quickly.

"Ever hear him speak of her?"

"He dond't tell me nottin'—only when he wants me to do somet'ing for him. He aind't said nottin' apoudt de goil."

"And how about her brother?" asked Nick quickly.

"Vell——"

"Out with it, Pete!" advised the detective.

"I dell you, Misder Carter, you vill get me into tr-r-rouble!" cried Pete, rolling his eyes and his r's at the same time.

"You know what you can do, Pete."

"Ach! Vell, there iss a game doin' mit dot lobster."

"The fellow that you once kept drugged, or drunk, out there in the old house beyond New Rochelle?"

"Yah! Undt I only heardt apoudt idt last night. How qvick you know apoudt t'ings, Misder Carter!" added Dutch Pete, marveling.

"That's my business," said Nick, with a chuckle, remembering how it was all by chance that he knew anything at all about the new move of Feltman.

"We're to ship dot feller off again; but dis time idt iss goin' to be for his finish," declared Pete.

"What! You mean to say that Jake proposes to kill him?"

"Nein! Vot you t'ink—dot I pe fool enough for *dot?* Nix! I vill not mix me in no murder pitzness."

"What do you mean, then?"

Dutch Pete drew closer. He leaned on the table with both of his hairy hands, and he spoke more quickly and less brokenly, as he unfolded to the detective the plan as he had heard it discussed by Jake Feltman and his other coworkers the night before, after Jake had left the theatre and received his report from the spy that he had set to follow Nick Carter and Miss Sadie Arnot.

And that conspiracy, although it bore no relation to blood-shedding, was as heinous a crime as Nick believed had ever been planned by the criminal mind of such a desperate and reckless villain as Jake Feltman, the Hester Street fence!

CHAPTER VI.

DUTCH PETE'S DOUBLE.

When Dutch Pete had completed his revelation, Nick, without verbal comment, tapped a signal to Patsy, and very soon thereafter his young assistant brought into the chief a copy of the story as the thief had related it. Nick read it through once to himself; then he called Pete's attention and read it aloud.

"Is that correct, Pete?" he demanded.

"I might have knowed youse would do me!" cried Pete, in apprehension. "Subbose dot paper gits to Shake. Vot vill become of me, heh?"

"It is not going to get to Jake, you may be sure," declared Nick Carter.

"Vell, somet'ings might happen——"

"That's right. You can be sure that something is bound to happen—to Jake."

"I dond't know dot," cried Pete, shaking his head.

"You don't believe I am a bigger man than Feltman, eh?" said Nick, laughing. "And I suppose you wouldn't put your mark on this before a notary, Pete?"

"Ach! Not on your life!" shouted the thief.

"Well, it doesn't really matter. It will make an interesting record, nevertheless. And it is very useful to me. Now, Pete, I am going to make use of you in a way that will surprise you. And you're to put up no objection—see?"

"You vill get me into tr-r-rouble mit Shake. I can

feel it comin' alretty," declared the Dutchman, in much anxiety.

"You can take your choice: Run the risk of getting into trouble with him or with me," said the detective grimly.

"Do you call dot a *choice?*" grunted Pete, with a rueful grin.

"What does that mean?"

With a shrug of his heavy shoulders the thief nodded at the clean-cut, keen-faced detective. No two men could seem more dissimilar, not alone in habits and appearance, but in mind and morals.

"You mean that you will keep faith with me?" said Nick gravely.

Another nod.

"See that you do, Pete," said Nick Carter sternly. "This is an emergency that I consider important. I am going to put Jake Feltman behind the bars. If *you* do anything to queer my game you'll get the limit. For in the end I'll get Jake, anyway; *and you'll go with him!*"

"I know dot," said Pete, with a sigh.

Nick got up then, and said: "Follow me."

He led the way to his own dressing room. Joseph came to ask if he needed his aid, and to stare hard at Dutch Pete.

"No, Joseph. I'll ring if I want you," said Nick, and sat down before his make-up table. "Sit there, Pete," he added, and pointed to a chair in which the thief's face was shown in a good light.

So, glancing now and then at the stolid-faced Dutchman, and from him to the mirror in front, Nick began to work upon his own features, and to mould them into some semblance of those owned by the thief.

To obtain the effect of Dutch Pete's complexion was easy; but around his eyes was a multitude of little wrinkles, and no work of the make-up artist would entirely satisfy close scrutiny on this point. The stubby light mustache of the crook was easy to copy, however, and Nick found a close-fitting wig which matched Pete's hair.

Gradually there was a transformation in the detective's appearance that actually made the thief round-eyed with wonder. He could only sit and watch the work of Nick Carter in wordless surprise.

By and by Nick turned from his table and grinned—rather, leered—at the man whose features he had been copying. It was just such a low, cunning look as Pete was used to showing when he had said something he considered smart. It was Pete to the life!

"What do you think of me—heh, va-at?" drawled the detective.

Pete started, half rising from his chair, and the red deepened in his face. It was, seemingly, his own voice that had issued from Nick Carter's lips!

"Get up and walk across the floor, Pete," commanded the detective, in his ordinary tone.

The half-stunned thief did as he was commanded, slouching up and down the room several times, while Nick watched him closely. By and by the detective nodded and heaved himself up from his seat in the same way the other had done.

Then he essayed Pete's gait. Pete dragged his feet rather than lifted them, yet he walked softly, as behooved a man in his business! Nick got the trick so perfectly in a few trials that the thief marveled again.

"Say, Misder Carter! you vill get me into tr-r-rouble mit mein friendts. You are me."

"I won't make you any trouble, Pete. Nor will I use this disguise to queer anybody but Jake Feltman."

"But if anybody sees de bot' of us! If you had on mein clothes——"

"Which I am going to put on. Strip, Pete. I want your cap, coat, pants, and footgear."

"Oh, I say! dot is comin' idt strong!" cried the thief.

"Well, you won't need them again. You are going to remain here, Pete. You can consider yourself a visitor or a prisoner, just as you please. Not until I finish this Jake Feltman will you be set free.

"Now, you won't want your clothes again. For either you will go away from here with a new suit and a hundred dollars in your pocket; or you will go where the State will furnish you with an outfit right through. It's all according to how amenable you are," declared Nick sternly.

"Undt I suppose you call dot anudder choice!" cried Pete. "Vell, I dond't mindt havin' a new suit; but I dond't vant it too loudt a pattern." And the thief chuckled.

"I fancied you would see the advisability of helping me," said Nick quietly.

He sent for Patsy, and put the Dutchman in his care. Then he got into the garments that Pete removed. Even Patsy was astonished by the transformation of his chief, although he had been familiar with his wonderful powers for years.

Nick put several necessary articles in his pockets, left a message for Chick, who was helping him on the case, and started downstairs. Joseph chanced to be in the lower hall. The old servant looked up and saw, apparently, the thief descending, and he stepped forward to bar his progress.

Nick turned his head aside and, in his own voice, called:

"All right, Joseph! Let the man out."

Joseph, never suspecting that it was his master in disguise who was coming down, went to the front door and opened it. As Nick passed through he leered up into Joseph's face, with the very expression of the Dutchman; but in his own voice he said:

"Joseph, I could carry away the whole house, and you wouldn't be the wiser!"

He left the butler transfixed in the vestibule, staring after him.

Nick did not care who saw him leave his house in this disguise; and for a very good reason. If Jake Feltman was having his movements watched, the spy would doubtless have seen Dutch Pete go into Nick's

house, as Patsy had brought him from the country, openly, in the automobile.

Nick's idea was to completely deceive Feltman and his friends, if possible, regarding his present identity. He wanted to look like Dutch Pete, act like him, and be altogether taken for him by the very men the thief was working with.

So now Nick made his way downtown to Hester Street, and, after looking the neighborhood over a bit, as though he were wary, he went to the side door of Jake Feltman's shop, where the Jew purported to do a general pawnbroking business, but where, in reality, he met and dealt with thieves and burglars of every class.

Pete was not a frequent visitor at Jake's place; but he was well known to the clerks. Nick slipped into a booth—one of the private stalls where special customers were served—and when a clerk came to see what he wanted, he asked hoarsely for the boss.

"You got anything important to see him on, old man?" inquired the clerk. "Jake's busy."

"You shust say 'Nick Carter' to him," whispered the supposed Dutch Pete, behind his hand. "He vill see me."

"I reckon if I told Jake Nick Carter was here, he would see him—and in a hurry!" chuckled the clerk. "What d'ye think that guy's name is—a password?"

"Dot's vot idt iss, dis time," declared the visitor, nodding his head vigorously.

"Well, I'll see," said the clerk, and went away. After a time he came back and nodded to the supposed crook. "You're to go up, Pete. But the boss is in no sweet temper, and you'll have to take it, I reckon."

He opened the gate in the counter, and Nick passed through and down to the rear of the store, where a stairway led to the second floor—the main warehouse and office of Jacob Feltman. In this new store—Jake had recently moved—Nick Carter had never been; but he managed to hide his unfamiliarity with the place. At least, the clerk who finally ushered him into the presence of the pawnbroker did not seem to notice that the visitor was not perfectly sure of his way.

"Is that you, Pete? What do you want down here? Has that old ruin I bought as the site of a country home some time—when I retire—burned down?" demanded the pawnbroker, glaring at the visitor over the top of his desk.

"It's worse as dot, Shake," declared the disguised detective, seeing that the man was unsuspicious of him.

"Eh? Speak up! What's drove you in here?"

The other came nearer, bent down toward the shrewd fence so that his disguise would be under closer inspection, and whispered:

"Sh! I vas kidnapped."

"You were what?" demanded Feltman, starting back in his chair, and evidently noticing nothing wrong with "Pete."

"Kidnapped—shust dot," said Nick, gravely nodding.

"What the devil are you giving me? What kind of a stall is this?" cried the angry fence. "Is this one of your Dutch jokes?"

"I nefer choke," declared the other solemnly.

"Well, you'll 'choke,' and 'choke' sudden, if you don't explain yourself mighty quick, you thick-headed Dutchman!"

"Undt I suppose dot iss a choke, heh?" returned the supposed crook, leering down at the pawnbroker.

"Will you tell me what you mean by all this nonsense?" cried the Jew, angrily pounding his desk.

"I dell you," said Nick solemnly, "dot I vas kidnapped. Dis morning, ven I go de house oudt, dere vas a pig ortomobile in der road standing yet. You know, dere iss nodt mooch ortomobiles come by dot country home of yours, Shake—heh?" And he leered again.

"Hang you! go on," commanded Feltman.

"In dot ortomobile vas two fellers, undt I go over undt ask dem vot dey vants? Idt vas brivate broperty they vas on yet, undt I dell dem so——"

"Oh, cut it! cut it!" cried Feltman.

"How can I tell you, den?" asked his visitor, evidently bewildered.

"Do be as brief as possible, Pete," groaned the Jew.

"Vell! I dells dese fellers dot, undt vot you subbose?"

"Suppose what?" snapped Feltman.

"De feller on de pack seat he reached out a gun—a real, sure-nough gun!—undt poke her under mein nose vonce! Undt he dells me to shtep into de car, undt I didt it. Undt he toldt me to sit down peside him, undt I didt it, yet. Undt he toldt me to keep mein mout' shut—undt I didt dot, too, you bet!" finished the supposed Dutchman excitedly. "Undt vot you call dot, heh? Vasn't I kidnapped yet?"

"It sounds like a fake to me," said Jake Feltman sharply. "What do you mean by this nonsense, Pete?"

"A fake, heh?" cried the other. "I vas brought down to de city. It vas a fake, heh? I vas taken to a house—whose house do you subbose, Shake?"

Feltman suddenly leaped up with a cry. For an instant the disguised detective feared that his trick had been guessed by the fence. But at once he was reassured, for the Jew cried:

"Not to Nick Carter's house?"

"Dot vas idt," declared the supposed Pete, nodding his head gloomily.

"The devil!"

"Dot iss vot dot feller iss—I haf said so meinselluf."

"He arrested you?" demanded Feltman.

"Nein."

"What did he want of you, then?"

The disguised detective leered again in the Dutchman's own way, and he worked his arm up and down like a pump handle.

"Of course he did!" cried the fence. "And I suppose you told all you knew—you jackass!"

"If I am a chackass, vy do you keep me on, Shake?" demanded the other, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, what did you tell him?"

"As many lies as I could t'ink of."

"What did he want to know?"

"Vot you vas goin' to do mit dot lobster vot you hadt oudt to de old house dot time—de von his sister come to nurse yet."

"Perdition!" ejaculated Feltman, sinking into his seat again.

"Oh, he iss onto de idea dot you vas friendly mit dot guy," said the knowing Pete, wagging his head.

"And a fat lot of good may it do him—if you haven't leaked."

"I dond't know noddings—mooch. Undt so I toldt him."

"Didn't he threaten you?" asked Feltman suspiciously.

"Suah!"

"How?"

"Vell—he knows some of de t'ings I vas mixed up in; but I toldt him to go ahead undt push 'em. But, py shove! if he does you got to help me oudt, Shake!"

"Haven't I told you I'd take care of you, Pete?" returned the other carelessly.

"Huh! dot vas easy to say," grumbled the disguised detective. "But you mostly make me go idt blind. Some day I vill make a pad misdake pecause I dond't know enough, yet."

"What do you want to know?" demanded Feltman surlily.

"I vant to know where I come in yet!" ejaculated the supposed Pete excitedly. "I dond't know noddings till it vas done. Look at de time we cracked dot oldt store of yours, Shake, undt dot necklace got avay——"

The Jew smote his desk again. He was in an evil temper to-day.

"Can it!" he growled. "You couldn't have saved that if you'd known all about it. It was that Nick Carter again—and he is in my way yet. I tried to fool him about the kidnapping of that girl. But, by Heaven, I'll get him this time—as sure as I live, I'll get him!"

"Chee!" chuckled the other. "Ledt me hellup you, Shake. Dere ain't nopody so mooch interested in getting dot Nick Carter into tr-r-rouble as meinselluf. Dot's so!"

"I believe you do hate the scoundrel, Pete."

"Huh!" grunted his visitor. "Gif me ein chance to fix him—you vill see how I feels toward Nick Carter."

"You already know what we intend doing to that fool who owns—well, to the fellow that I brought out to you drunk that time."

"Vell—I haf an idea vot you mean," grunted the supposed crook.

"And as long as you are in here now," continued Feltman thoughtfully, "I might as well tell you your part in the scheme we have afoot. I am going to use you, Pete, and shall depend a good deal on you. But I never tell anybody my full plans until they are matured."

The visitor nodded vigorously, and drew nearer. Feltman looked around the office to make sure that there was nobody near. He even went to the door and peered out into the wareroom. Then he came back to his desk, motioned his visitor to sit down beside him, and proceeded to pour into the ear of the man he most feared might learn the plan the details of the plot that his evil mind had hatched against Sadie Arnot and her weakling brother.

CHAPTER VII.

"SERGEANT TONRA."

Nick Carter had left certain instructions for his chief assistant, Chick, when he quitted the house that morning disguised as the thief, Dutch Pete. These instructions caused Chickering Carter to perform a miracle.

At least, so it would seem. Nick had left his home in the guise of the thief, and he certainly had not returned at noon. But at that hour Nick Carter left his Madison Avenue home, and made his way to the Battery, where he boarded one of the iron steamboats for Coney Island.

This was an old game of Nick Carter's and of his chief assistant. Nick often had transformed himself into the semblance of Chick, and the latter, as now, appeared to the eyes of even Nick's close friends, to be Nick Carter himself!

There was an obvious reason for this disguise. It could well be supposed that Feltman was having Nick watched. If the detective did not appear out all day, after returning from his visit to Philip Arnot, the Hester Street fence might suspect the real identity of the supposed "Dutch Pete" who had come to see him.

This must be avoided, for it would have been a catastrophe for Jake to suspect who his visitor really was.

So Chick coolly appropriated his chief's identity and sailed for Coney Island, "the city without clocks."

An amusing little occurrence on the boat may be noted. Two gentlemen pacing the deck saw the detective, and one of them bowed and smiled, and, after speaking to his companion, they both came over to Chick.

"How are you, Mr. Carter? Taking an outing, are you?" said the older man, who seemed prosperous and was rather an attractive person. The other man was somewhat furtive looking, and, although well dressed, did not impress Chick so favorably.

"I'm running down to the island on both business and pleasure," said Chick, without explaining, of

course, that he was not the "Mr. Carter" whom the speaker thought he recognized.

"We're going down to get my motor boat—you know, the thirty-footer I was telling you about. The *Mary Ennis*—named after my wife, you know, Carter?"

"Indeed, Mr. Ennis?" returned Chick, who would not have known the man's name at all had he not mentioned the name of his boat in just this way.

"I left it down there last week. We're going to run out for a couple of hours by and by. Will you join us?"

It was an exceedingly hot day and the city had been torrid. Here on the water it was fine; but Chick was pretty sure that until the breeze shifted and came in from the sea, the island was going to be a hot box, too.

A run in a fast boat out to sea was attractive. He did not know this Ennis from "Adam's off ox"; but he seemed to be a decent fellow.

"I'll go if you are not starting too early," said Chick.

The other man whispered a word to Ennis, and the latter nodded.

"We've got nothing to start us at any particular hour. 'Time was made for slaves,' anyway." And he laughed. "Say at half-past three or four o'clock?"

"Suits me," Chick rejoined. "Where is your boat?"

Mr. Ennis told him, and they sat together for the rest of the sail, smoking and talking. It was evident that Nick's friend did not for an instant suspect that he was not speaking with the right Carter, and Chick was immensely amused.

He separated from the two when the island was reached, however, and made his way at once to Captain Jack McCormick's Philippine Village, which occupied a large, fenced-in inclosure on Surf Avenue. The show really was a valuable acquisition to the popular entertainments of the island.

There were something like fifty members of the wilder tribes of the Philippine Islands, living in their own huts, and much as they did at home, in one part of the inclosure. There were also, beside the Igorrotes and Bantocs, a large company of other Filipinos, and 'breeds, who were engaged in the "big show" which was played twice daily.

The show itself consisted of several pictures, or scenes, portraying incidents in the Philippines at the time when the United States forces were quelling the rebellion there. Indeed, the adventures of Sergeant Tonra, and his squad of men, who were captured and carried into the hills by the mountain tribes; their life among the savage people, and the final escape of the sergeant and his single remaining companion, formed the basis of the story enacted by Captain Jack McCormick's company of performers.

It was not a bad spectacle, as a spectacle; the half-bred Spaniards and more civilized Filipinos did their part with gusto; and the mountain savages grew wildly excited at each performance, giving color and vividness to the show that satisfied the public—and, incidentally, was bringing a lot of money into the coffers of Captain Jack.

The fact that he had obtained the services of Sergeant Tonra himself—the man who had been complimented by his superiors at the time of his escape from the enemy, and had been favorably mentioned in the dispatches to the war department—lent considerable reality to the show. The sergeant was McCormick's biggest drawing card.

So it was really "up to" Captain Jack to keep the weak fellow sober. It was for his own interest to do so, and, as the sergeant's sister had told Nick Carter, the proprietor of the show had been very kind in looking after the young man.

In some way, however, his influence was counterbalanced—more than counterbalanced, indeed—by the work of Jake Feltman, or his henchmen. Chick was down here for the purpose of meeting the sergeant, or Charlie Arnot; and, likewise, to try and discover how the fellow was being influenced by those who wished to cheat him and his sister out of their mine holdings.

The detective went straight to the Philippine show and asked for Captain Jack. When he met the bluff and hearty individual who owned the show, Chick did not take the trouble to explain exactly *who* he was, but used one of Nick's cards.

"Oh, yes, by Jove!" exclaimed McCormick. "You're Nick Carter—you're the gentleman who helped Miss Arnot so splendidly a while back. I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Carter—put her there!" And McCormick shook hands with enthusiasm.

"I understand," said Chick, getting right down to cases, "that Miss Arnot needs somebody to help her again."

"What's that?" asked the captain, raising his eyebrows in surprise.

"She may be in no personal danger; but the people who were after her property before have not lost their love of money."

"Not that measly relative of her—the fellow who was mixed up in that bank scandal?"

"I am not sure whether or no Philip Arnot is at the foundation of the present plot against the girl's peace of mind," said Chick. "If so, he is keeping very dark."

"Pah! he's a rat.'

"Well, there are others after the mine."

"I know."

"And some of them have got a hold on this brother of hers," said Chick earnestly.

"Hang it! that's so, I admit. And I don't understand it, either," muttered McCormick.

"Do you mean that you have no idea how this Charlie Arnot——"

"Hold on! We don't call him that here—and he doesn't want to be called it, either."

"He ought to be proud of his other name," said Chick.

"That's right. As the sergeant he really made a hit," said McCormick. "I tell you! there is good in the fellow. If it hadn't been for the drink he would have got a commission."

"So I understand."

"And as Sergeant Tonra he has really done something. As Charlie Arnot he never was worth the powder to blow him to Halifax!"

"But he is proud of his family name."

"He hates to have it mentioned. He told me in confidence that he was the only one of the Arnots who could not keep the name clean. Huh!" snorted the captain; "that Philip Arnot seems to have trailed his name through the mire enough."

"He's not of Charlie's branch of the family," said Chick.

"That's so. And Charlie has never gone near Philip, either. His sister did all that. And the trickster came near doing them dirt, too."

"This Jew, Feltman, seems to be the man who is running the game now, eh?"

"I tell you, sir, I know less about it now than before," declared McCormick earnestly. "They are after Charlie, and they get him, too. Every few days he is woozy, and I have the deuce of a time keeping him up to his work. Once I had to put in a substitute for a matinée."

"He really plays in your show, then?"

"The sergeant? Bet your life!" declared the captain enthusiastically. "Oh, we have got this thing down pretty fine. We show how the niggers surround the sergeant's command and capture the whole outfit, take them to the mountain village, torture some of the boys, how the rest escape and are killed by the niggers, or die in the swamp. And finally the sergeant himself drops and is brought out of the jungle on the back of a pony by his single remaining comrade—and, by Jove!" concluded the enthusiastic showman, "I'd have got that fellow to play in the piece, too, if he hadn't been killed last year in a canteen fight down at a post in Arizona."

"Well, to get back to Arnot—or, Tonra; when does he get away from you for this booze?"

"I'm pretty busy about the last end of the show at each performance. I'm my own stage manager, you understand, as well as treasurer, skipper, mate, and crew of the captain's gig!" exclaimed McCormick, grinning. "Well, the times the sergeant has really got away from me has been just following a performance. I haven't seen either that Studiford fellow around——"

"I have every reason to believe that he is not working with the conspirators against the brother and sister now," interposed Chick.

"That so?"

"It's Jake Feltman who is to be feared."

"And he doesn't come here himself—that's sure," declared McCormick. "I know that fellow!"

"But he could have men come after the sergeant without your knowing it?"

"Naturally. And I suppose that's how he gets tolled away. You understand that, between the shows—the afternoon and evening performances—there are a lot of people in here, wandering about and talking with the performers. That is one of the ways we have of making money. The natives get a chance to sell a lot of little things of their own manufacture, and some folks like to brush up their knowledge of Spanish with some of the 'breeds.

"They buy a good many things, you see, during this intermission, and there is a lecturer goes around the village and explains the life and daily habits of the natives.

"Now, during this time, you see, the sergeant is free. I am confoundedly busy during those hours. I usually lose sight of him as he is being rescued by the band of constabulary and U. S. Cavalry that plow into the little brown men at the last of the show, and, by Jove! it's got so now that I never know whether I'm going to see Charlie at all when the next performance opens. If it was any other fellow," added McCormick, with disgust, "I'd have tied a can to him long ago."

A little later Chick met Arnot himself. He was a lean, quick-motioned, rather good-looking fellow. There was a marked resemblance between him and the girl Chick had noticed in the theatre the evening before, and whom he had thought looked so unhappy—his sister, Sadie.

Aside from his bronzed complexion, Charlie Arnot was so much like his twin sister in outward appearance that they could have dressed in each other's clothing and passed muster.

He was nervous, distraught in his manner, and all the time Chick was trying to talk with him, the man seemed forgetful and ill at ease. He had chanced into the office where Chick was sitting with McCormick, and the detective had tipped the captain off not to introduce him to the sergeant. Nevertheless Chick fell into conversation with the young man, and so tried to gain a better idea of his character.

The sergeant sat near the office door, where he could look out into the show grounds and see everybody who passed. Suddenly Chick saw him start, and then rise quickly and step to the door, craning his neck.

The detective would have given a good deal to see who had attracted Sergeant Tonra's attention, but he could not see, and he dared not show curiosity.

"Well, so-long," said the sergeant, over his shoulder, as he went out.

Captain Jack, who was busy at his desk, grunted, and Chick wished the young man a pleasant farewell.

"He's due to go on in a few minutes," said McCormick.

"And I'll beat it, too," said Chick.

"Will you go into the grand stand and watch the performance?"

"I've seen it before, so I'll not accept your invita-

tion to-day, captain," returned the detective, and went to the door.

Sergeant Tonra had disappeared, and walking away from the office was a man who Chick thought he knew. He was a lean, well-dressed man, and his back was to the detective.

"Isn't that the chap who was with that Ennis? Humph! looked like him. That reminds me—I guess I'll go over and take in that motor-boat spin. It's hotter than the lower regions right here."

He walked out of the Philippine Village and made his way to the dock where the *Mary Ennis* lay.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACCIDENT ON THE "MARY ENNIS."

When Chick joined the motor-boat party, however, he found already there the furtive man, who was introduced to him as Ducey. He didn't like the looks of Ducey any better than he had at first.

But Mr. Ennis' party was made up, in the main, of very nice fellows. There were no ladies aboard, and the owner gave the machinist orders to speed up for a fast run as soon as they were well off the dock-head.

"There's one thing about a motor boat, Carter," said the master of the craft, sitting down beside Chick in the bow. "No matter how hot the day is—and I thought I should bake back there on the island—she carries her breeze with her."

And it was true enough. The rush of the craft through the sea as she gathered speed seemed to create a stiff breeze. Hats had to be tied on, or otherwise anchored, and the sea parted before the bows in an increasing wave of foam-streaked green water.

They looked back at the island, along the glaring white beaches and the gaudily painted "near-palaces" and towers. By night, and alight with electricity, the scene would be marvelous; but in the day it was tawdry.

Most of the company, having secured a few mouthfuls of fresh air, like most Americans—who never will learn how to rest—began playing cards. Chick did not join them, nor did the furtive-looking man. The latter began an idle chat with the detective.

He puzzled Chick. Why was Ducey taking so much interest in him? Who was Ducey, anyway?

"These motors can go like kildee," said the man; "but I never feel just safe in them—do you?"

"I'm not nervous," replied Chick briefly.

"For instance, there's that rowboat, or yawl, or whatever it is, on deck here. How long would it take to get her launched if something happened?"

Chick eyed the tender idly. "Not many seconds. She seems in good shape and the skids are slushed properly. Unlash her and I reckon a man, with a single push, could get her into the water."

"You think so, eh?"

"If you're nervous you shouldn't go in one of these boats. It is true that, when anything happens to them, it usually happens quick."

"That gasoline tank, for instance!" ejaculated Ducey.

"Well, keep fire away from it and there's little danger from the tank," said the detective, easily.

"But, do you notice that the thing is open?" said Ducey.

"Open?" repeated Chick, in surprise. "You don't mean to say the cover is off?"

"There's a manhead—and it's loose," declared Ducey, seemingly more excited as Chick seemed to consider the fact of moment. "Ain't I right? Isn't it dangerous?"

"Why—Ennis can't know that," said Chick, glancing at the card players in the extreme stern of the boat. "And what's the matter with his machinist, I wonder? He must be a confoundedly careless plug——"

He rose up as he spoke and started aft. Ducey rose, too, but Chick did not see that the man likewise walked toward the stern.

On his way the detective passed around the gasoline tank, and standing on his tip toes managed to see the hole through which the tank was filled. It was a fact that the round cover had been unscrewed and only lay half over the hole.

Chick came down solidly on his heels and swung his body around to continue toward the card players. His instant movement providentially saved his eyesight!

He was conscious of a flash, and the shock of an explosion cast him across the narrow deck to the rail, against which he was brought up in a heap. A pillar of flame shot from the gasoline tank, and Chick realized that the fluid had spattered all over him and that his clothing was ignited.

As the fierce flames shot up about him, licking at his face and hands, the detective got into action. There was but a single chance for life, and he took it, despite the fact that the water was fathoms deep and that the motor boat was shooting ahead at terrific speed.

Chick vaulted over the low rail, and the turbulent water closed instantly over his head!

He had quenched one devouring element with the other—but good swimmer that he was, the sea might prove his master.

The explosion of the tank, and Chick's disappearance over the rail, seemed coincident. Before the chorused yell rose from the other members of the party the motor boat was burning briskly and Chick was out of sight.

The pilot and the mechanician rushed to try and smother the flames; but Ennis appreciated the fact that one of his friends was in imminent peril from drowning rather than fire.

He leaped to the lashed tender, drawing out his pocketknife as he did so. With two fierce slashes

he cut the rope and gave the light boat a great push down its skids.

"Come on, boys! Man overboard!" he shouted.

But as the boat went out over the slanting after deck of the motor craft somebody fell against Ennis, and he shoved over the tender too far. This bungling helper was Ducey.

"Now we've done it!" roared Ennis, and then began to swear unconsciously in his excitement.

A wave had caught the tender as she slipped over the side, and she turned turtle and bobed astern in the wake of the bigger craft, which still tore through the sea without abatement of speed.

The tender could not sink; the air under her kept her on the surface; but if Chick Carter came up near her he could scarcely right the lifeboat alone.

Ennis rushed to the engine and stopped her. The others were fast subduing the flames. But as the boat began to slow down Ennis gazed back again in her wake, straining his eyes to see a black spot bobbing on the surface of the sea.

He did not see it. All he beheld was the tender, upside down, and floating rapidly away with the strong tide.

It was some time before the fire was quenched. The gasoline tank was wrecked. There was no fuel to keep up the engine. The motor boat rocked like a log upon the sea, while the tender bobbed quite a half mile astern.

As it chanced there was no passing vessel, either steam or sail. The motor boat was helpless; so were the men aboard of her—as far as aiding the missing man went.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Ennis. "Nick Carter is lost!"

CHAPTER IX.

NICK HEARS OF HIS OWN DEATH.

On a certain block near the pawn shop of Jake Feltman on Hester Street, and in the middle of the block, was a small café, the curtain of which was always drawn across the window, saving on Sunday when, if the patrolman wanted to, he could stand on tiptoe and see one end of the bar.

There was a striking peculiarity about this place. Seldom did two customers enter it together.

Men slouched along the street, sometimes looking furtively over their shoulders, and around at the people on the street. At the café they hesitated, gave a final glance around, and darted inside. Usually, too, they used the side door, or "family entrance" as it was called. There was a good-sized room behind the barroom proper, and this was better patronized than the bar itself. The customers of the place were uniformly of a retiring disposition.

The man who kept it was an "old lag"—i. e., ex-convict—who had served the best of twenty years for manslaughter. His customers included burglars, strong-arm men, panhandlers, fagins, moll buzzers, and pickpockets, with a sprinkling of higher-class criminals, such as confidence men, gamblers, and race-track touts.

As it drew toward evening three men sat at a corner table in the back room of this place, and talked in whispers. One was Jake Feltman, the fence; there were with him a sly, skinny young fellow, who was known in this neighborhood as "Timmy, the Rat," and Dutch Pete.

At least, to all intents and purposes, it was Dutch Pete. Nobody had as yet discovered Nick Carter's disguise, and he had been hanging about the locality all day.

Timmy was the sharp lad who had jumped up behind Nick's automobile the evening before, and overheard his conversation with Sadie Arnot. He had a part in this conspiracy that the fence was hatching against the fortune and peace of mind of the Arnot twins.

Jake had met these two men here to further explain his plans and to instruct them in the work which they were to perform for him in connection with this dastardly plot. "Dutch Pete"—in other words Nick Carter—had hung about until this hour according to instructions from Jake, received in the pawnbroker's private office that forenoon.

Timmy, the Rat, had just arrived. And while the two supposedly minor criminals, and their master, sat at the little table, another man connected with the affair entered the thug's den.

This person looked to be prosperous, and certainly was well dressed. He was in haste, and was excited, however; and as he sank into a fourth chair at the table he was noticeably pale, and his hand shook.

"What's the trouble with you, Ducey?" queried Jake sharply. "What's the news? Did you spot him?"

Ducey beckoned the white-aproned waiter and asked hoarsely for some whisky. He did not speak in reply to Feltman's question until he had received and swallowed this drink. Then he nodded solemnly, looking straight into the Jew's face, and said:

"I spotted him. I got your message and went aboard that boat. I met Mr. Ennis. Everything worked like magic. He went down to see our man, I reckon; but I saw that young fool, too."

"Yes?"

"I warned him that an attempt was to be made by some interfering people to spoil everything. I told him that we'd drop the whole business if he did not come to time at once. I scared him."

"And then?"

"It was time for him to go to work. I only saw him a moment. But I had my eye on the other."

"On who?" asked Feltman.

"On Nick Carter."

"Humph! Well, what of it?"

"Ennis invited him to go along on his boat—and I got an invite, too."

"So you've been hobnobbing with Nick Carter,

have you?" chuckled Feltman, apparently much amused.

The disguised Dutch Pete was a whole lot more amused, however! He had some difficulty of playing his part at this juncture.

"Yes. Ennis took us out in the motor boat. Those —those boats are cranky things."

"Eh?"

Feltman was evidently surprised by the manner of Ducey. Now he looked at him more closely, and he leaned toward him to ask:

"What's got into you, man? What about Nick Carter?"

The man looked all around the café again. Then, licking his lips, he leaned closer to his companions, whom he looked at sharply, one after the other.

"You can let yourself go here, you know, Ducey," snarled Jake, somewhat put out. "We're friends."

"There's some things it ain't wise to talk about—even among friends," whispered Ducey.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" demanded Jake. "You act like you'd seen a ghost."

"I haven't. But if ever you see Nick Carter again, you'll see a ghost!"

Ducey sank back in his chair, and motioned for the waiter to bring him more drink. But Jake, with blazing eyes, seized Ducey's hand and stopped the signal.

"By Heaven!" he snarled. "You've had enough, I reckon!"

"You think I've been drinking, eh?"

"I've just seen you throw one hooker into you. Say what that statement means before you soak up any more fire-water—and don't try to fool *me!*" added Jake threateningly. "I've got too much at stake in this game to stand being fooled."

Ducey suddenly covered his face with his hands, and his shoulders shook. He was all of a nervous tremor.

Said Dutch Pete, and it was mighty difficult for him to say anything just then, for he could not help being moved by suspicion:

"Dot feller has got de 'tremens, Shake. He's been havin' bad dreams."

"Shut up!" ejaculated Jake fiercely. "Ducey! tell me what you mean, and tell me quick!"

"He's dead!" gasped Ducey, without uncovering his face.

"Who's dead?"

"Nick Carter."

Dutch Pete sprang to his feet, but Jake and Timmy were held to their chairs by their surprise.

The supposed Dutchman, however, controlled himself without speaking, and in a moment dropped back in his seat. He knew that something untoward had happened to Chick, and the great detective loved his adopted son as he loved nobody else in the world. It showed the perfect control under which his emotions were when he could let Jake Feltman take the lead at this juncture.

The latter finally said:

"Ducey, you're lying to me."

"S' help me, I ain't," said the man, showing his quivering, pale face again.

"Nick Carter *dead?*"

"Drowned."

"How did it happen?"

Ducey trembled again and pointed to his own breast, licking his lips once more.

"I—I did it," he whispered.

"By thunder, Ducey! You don't mean it?"

Feltman smote the table before him; his face shone; his eyes sparkled.

"If this is so, you've done us a favor that can't easily be repaid. Is there any danger?"

"There will be a coroner's inquiry; but nothing will ever be found out," whispered Ducey, still shaking. "Now give me a drink."

"Not whisky, man—not whisky," declared Jake. "Have some wine. Here, George, bring us a bottle of wine—great news! Two bottles of the real fuzzy water, if you like. Nothing is too good for you, Ducey!"

But Ducey was still all of a-tremble. Had Jake not been entirely attentive to him he must have noticed the hardly controlled emotion of the disguised detective.

"Now, tell us how you did it? Drowned, eh?" repeated Jake.

"The gasoline tank of that motor boat was right in plain sight on deck. I got a chance to unscrew the cap of the manhole, and I left it open. I got Carter interested in the fact that there was danger. He went aft to look at the tank, and I crept up behind him and, at the right moment, I tossed my lighted cigarette into the blanked stuff."

"Gee," exclaimed Timmy, the Rat.

"I wouldn't have believed you had it in you—the pluck to do that," declared Jake warmly.

Dutch Pete sat dumb.

"She exploded almost in his face. He was covered with the stuff and was afire at once. And then—he jumped into the sea. Mind you, we were traveling at express speed when it happened."

"Ah!"

"There was a tender aboard that was launched in a few seconds. I had looked it over. When Ennis cast it adrift, intending to go to Nick Carter's rescue, I managed to capsize it, and the boat got away. You see?"

"You bet!" declared the delighted Feltman.

"The motor boat kept right on. We ran near half a mile before she was stopped. And then the engine would work no more. There was no fuel. D'ye see?"

"You put out the fire, then?"

"Yes."

"And the body?"

"It was not recovered. It sank. I did not see Nick Carter rise after he leaped overboard. At least,

he did not reach the tender, that floated bottom up. We were taken in tow an hour afterward and brought to Manhattan Beach. I got a train almost at once. I promised to go down again to-morrow to the inquest."

"But there was no body, then, eh?" asked Jake Feltman slowly, and his face clouded again.

"They hadn't recovered it when I left."

"Never mind opening that second bottle of wine, George," said the Jew harshly. "I guess we'll wait for further celebration, Ducey, until we hear the returns from the coroner's inquest."

"Don't you believe me?" cried Ducey angrily.

"Oh, I believe you all right," said Feltman, with a short laugh. "I think you tell the truth as far as you've gone. But I'll only believe Nick Carter dead on the finding of the coroner, and after I have paid my floral tribute to the corpse! What do you think about it, Pete?"

But "Dutch Pete" could not make audible reply.

CHAPTER X.

NICK ON THE JUMP.

Nick Carter had seldom found his nerve tried more keenly than at this moment. To hear that Chickering had been set afire and then apparently drowned by this villain, Ducey, was a shock that it was not easy to recover from.

Ducey was frightened by what he had done—there was no doubt of that. No amount of drink could entirely restore his nerve.

Nick was terribly anxious and disturbed, and for that very reason he had to exhibit increased caution. Finally he rose and stretched himself, and grunted.

"Say, dis dond't make not so mooch differ mit us, heh?" he drawled. "Ve goes righdt aheadt like you toldt us, Shake?"

"Sure. You know what you have to do now, Pete?" asked the fence.

"Suah."

"And you won't fail me to-morrow night?"

"I'll be Shonny on de spot," declared Nick.

"All right, then. Whether this is true that Ducey tells us, or not, we go right ahead with the plan. Don't make any bull, Pete."

"You can depend on me, Shake," declared the disguised detective, with emphasis. "If efery oder feller in de game failed you, Dutchy vould be right on de chob."

He shuffled out of the thieves' roost, and when he reached the street breathed a sigh of relief. But he could not throw off the character he had assumed—not yet. It would not have been safe to do so.

There might be half a dozen crooks lurking in the neighborhood, one of whom might be delegated by Jake Feltman to "keep tabs" on Dutch Pete. The fact that Dutch had been taken to Nick Carter's house that morning, and examined by the detective, had naturally made Jake suspicious of him. His suspicion might go so far as to set somebody to shadowing the man.

So, eager and anxious as Nick Carter was to get home and to set afoot inquiries about Chickering, he had to move most cautiously.

He had no means at hand to make a "lightning change" in costume and appearance, as he sometimes did; these were Pete's clothes that he had on, and he could not drop them so easily.

And he had to use a common conveyance to get away from the locality, or walk. No cabs for him this evening—with the possibility of some spy reporting his actions to the Hester Street fence!

He walked rather fast, however, when he had crossed the Bowery. Of course, he had immediately decided upon his course, and it led him into the lower West Side—to what is known as the Syrian quarter, below Washington Square.

There was a certain house there that he knew well. It was the property of Lucia di Giovanni, his sometime Italian assistant, and in a room in it Nick kept costumes and the materials for many characters—just as he kept a similar supply in a certain small office in the Flatiron Building.

As Lucia's house was in a poor quarter, and where poor people dwell crooks are apt to congregate, Dutch Pete laying a straight trail for this locality would not be likely to excite any comment.

Of course, as he went along, Nick Carter tried to discover if he was really being followed; but he could not make this out to be a certainty. Knowing Jake to be so wily, however, the detective would take no chances.

Troubled as he was by the report of Chickering's terrible accident, Nick did not for a moment lose sight of his single purpose. He had set out to bring to punishment the notorious fence and thieves' master, Jake Feltman. Nick was of single purpose when he had determined upon a piece of work. Twice had he thwarted the plans of the Jew; but this was not the end Nick sought.

Just one thing would satisfy the detective. He would never rest until he had seen Jake Feltman tried, convicted, and sentenced for a crime that should put him out of harm's way for a number of years.

He had planned a crime now that Nick was determined to let him carry out to a certain point. The planning of the dastardly business would not earn the wily fence his punishment; but the actual, proven attempt to carry the plan through would convict him in any court!

Nick made several quick turns and doubles, so as to confuse anybody who might be following, and in three-quarters of an hour after leaving the low saloon where he had talked with Jake, and Timmy, the Rat, and Ducey, he arrived at Lucia's house. It was let in small apartments to a number of poor people at present; but the beautiful Italian, Chickering's friend, had determined in the near future to tear

down the old building and construct in its place a "settlement house" for the amelioration of the condition of the people in the neighborhood.

Nick was glad that he ran no risk of meeting Lucia here. If what Ducey had told them was the truth, and his brave young assistant was really dead, Nick was well aware that Lucia would be prostrated by the shock.

Nick's room was on the top floor of the building, and he easily slunk in at the lower door and mounted the stairs without being noticed by the few people he met in the halls. Once in the room he struck a light and proceeded to lay off Dutch Pete's garments, to remove the scrubby mustache, and to otherwise change his appearance from that of the thief into some semblance of his proper self.

But he could not immediately appear outside this house as Nick Carter. Indeed, under the present circumstances, the detective must be very careful indeed of revealing his identity to anybody.

Ducey declared Nick Carter had been blown up in the accident on the *Mary Ennis*. It certainly would not do to have Nick Carter appear in the sight of any of Feltman's friends, then. And to have him show up from the building that the supposed Dutch Pete had entered shortly before, would never do in the world. It would queer the whole game. If Jake heard of Pete and any of the Carters being in juxtaposition again, he would grow shy and drop the scheme he had planned for the injury of Sadie Arnot and her brother.

Nick, therefore, selected clothing which he thought fitting to the character of an Italian laborer, and after removing Dutch Pete's complexion, proceeded to rub into his skin a dye that would make him look a good deal more like a child of "sunny It."

He had just about finished this make-up and was examining his features in the glass to make sure that he had neglected no point in making the change, when he was startled by somebody fumbling at the knob of the door.

He had locked the door when he entered; was this merely some mistaken lodger trying to find his own room? Or was somebody trying to break into the place?

Nick, suspecting naturally that some henchman of Jake Feltman was, after all, on his trail, jumped up and stepped softly to the door. The knob was turned slowly again, and then the door was shaken as though the person were trying to see if it were securely locked.

Nick slipped his own key into the lock, turned the bolt, which was well oiled, and suddenly opened the door. He came face to face with a burly individual in a stuffy seaman's jacket, baggy pants streaked with salt water, and a blue cap with a visor pulled low down on his forehead. On the band of the cap in faded gilt letters was the name, *Monitor*.

The fellow's face was mottled and blotched and unhealthy looking. Altogether he was a most unsavory looking old sea dog.

"What th' devil!" he ejaculated, staring at Nick in his guise of an Italian. "Huh! what wop is this, I wonder?"

Nick was amazed indeed. He fell back a bit, and the seaman tramped into the room as though he owned it.

"Ain't you got a tongue, you blamed guinea?" demanded the rude visitor.

At that Nick recovered his breath and kicked the door shut.

"What-a you want in my room—heh?" he demanded, in the shrill, staccato speech of the Italian who is more or less familiar with English. "What-a you want?"

"Say! I'm the guy that's askin' the questions," growled the other. "You ain't got no business here. This room don't belong to you."

"What you saay?" cried Nick angrily. "I no gotta de right in de room——"

"No you ain't, you wop. This is Nick Carter's place," declared the seaman coolly.

Nick sat down suddenly and looked at the visitor for some seconds in silence. What his final decision was regarding him, Nick did not reveal; but in his ordinary tone of voice he said:

"I am Nick Carter. Who are you? How came you here? Who sent you?"

"Say! You ain't no wop, then?" cried the seaman.

"I am Nick Carter. Somebody whom I know and am associated with very closely, sent you here, that is sure. Few know that I have a hide-out in this house."

"Well, Mr. Carter, I belong to the tug *Monitor*. We were towing in some empty brick barges this afternoon. We seen an accident to a motor boat off Manhattan Beach."

"The *Mary Ennis*," said Nick quietly.

"Yes. A feller was blowed overboard, and she lost her tender, too. It turned turtle and floated away. Later the motor boat got a tow to shore. We was too far away at the time to help her."

"Yes?" said Nick, looking at him steadily.

"You can't guess what come o' that feller that got blowed overboard!" ejaculated the seaman suddenly.

"Oh, yes I can!" cried Nick.

He leaped up and seized the seaman by the shoulders, shaking him to and fro in his chair, while he added:

"Chick! My dear fellow! For a moment you actually fooled me. But I'm so glad to see you alive, my boy, that I'll forgive this disguise. However did you escape with your life?"

"Then you heard about it?" demanded the disguised Chick, throwing off his cap.

"I heard of it—from Ducey."

"The deuce you did!"

"Yes."

"And I believe he was somehow the cause of that explosion. As I turned away from the tank I saw something alight—like a match—fly through the air."

"It was his lighted cigarette," declared Nick.

"Confound him! He did it on purpose."

"Of course. He is one of Feltman's understrappers. And it was from his own lips that I heard of your drowning. Ducey overturned the small boat, too."

"Blast him!" exclaimed Chick.

"And you escaped?"

"By Jove, Nick Carter is supposed to be drowned," said Chick, with a chuckle. "Ain't that a lark?"

"It makes it rather convenient just now, perhaps," admitted the chief.

"You see, I was almost blinded by the flames. See what they did to my face? No wonder my make-up fooled you, Nick," said his assistantt. "And I was all afire when I jumped overboard, too. But of course, the first plunge fixed that. I went down deep, and I was some time getting to the surface again.

"When I came up the motor boat was a good ways off, and still kiting along at a swift pace, while that overturned tender was between me and the view of anybody aboard the *Mary Ennis*.

"I suspected foul play," said Chick reflectively, "and instead of trying to climb on the keel of that overturned boat, I dove again and came up underneath the boat. There was air enough under there to last me an hour.

"I had noticed just before I started to examine that gasoline tank that there was a tug and a string of barges coming on a course for New York which would cross the wake of the *Mary Ennis*. I lay low as long as I could, and then popped my head out of the water again.

"By that time the disabled motor boat had disappeared, but the *Monitor* was close to me. I hailed her, and they took me aboard and grabbed the small boat, too.

"I borrowed these togs, and as soon as we docked at Brooklyn, I came across and over here, knowing that there would be something here in the room for me to shift to. Thunder, Nick! but it was an experience."

"My dear fellow!" declared his chief, "I was worried half to death when Ducey told his story. He labors under the delusion that he really has drowned you——"

"You mean, that he drowned you."

"Quite so! But Feltman took the story with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, if I keep out of sight until to-morrow night, I think Feltman will act more boldly. Get an item in the paper about this accident to-day. Have it reported that my body has not been recovered."

"But I've got it in for that Ducey," growled Chick. "Don't forget that. He's my meat, Nick."

CHAPTER XI.

SETTING THE BACK FIRE.

There was an upper room in the little, gaily painted building that Captain Jack McCormick used as an office at the Philippine Village. It was put at Nick's disposal by the proprietor of the show on the next day, and on request of Patsy who went down to the island in the morning and took Captain Jack partly into his confidence.

Nick Carter had spent the night in perfecting his plans, and at noontime, in the guise of Dutch Pete, appeared at the island in a certain place where Jake Feltman interviewed him for the last time before the "pulling off" of the great scheme which the fence believed would put the Arnots' mine in his possession.

Sergeant Tonra had been kept close by the proprietor of the show during the night, for Chick had arranged that the day before. The man was sober when the people began to enter the gates of the village; but he was sullen, the captain said.

About this hour there began to arrive, and to go quietly to the room over the office, several individuals who had nothing to do with the show. Nick was one of the first to arrive himself, and he slipped by in the guise of Dutch Pete.

Chick, in the khaki of the army, came later, and took some instructions from his chief. Chick had been taken on as an extra militiaman by Captain Jack so as to be able to keep somewhere near Sergeant Tonra during the show.

Patsy, too, was booked to join the company of "actors" in the evening, for it was after the evening performance that Feltman had planned to strike.

A little later two ladies arrived at the entrance to the Philippine Village and went into Captain Jack's office. Both were heavily veiled, and they arrived in a closed motor cab with a coat of arms on the panel of the door.

It was Lucia di Giovanni's carriage, and one of the ladies was Patsy's wife, Adelina. The other lady did not raise her veil until she was upstairs in Nick Carter's presence, although she shook hands warmly with Captain Jack.

Indeed, this second young woman was rather startled when she saw the slouching, leering Dutchman sitting in an armchair in the room that Captain Jack had put at the service of the detective.

"Where—where is Mr. Carter?" she asked Adelina.

Mrs. Garvan laughed heartily. "But I do not blame you, Miss Arnot," she said. "I have seen Nick in many disguises; but he almost always is a surprise to me in each one he assumes."

"Is it really Mr. Carter?" cried Sadie Arnot, hesitatingly approaching the detective.

Nick spoke in his ordinary tone of voice, and so assured her.

"And sit down, my dear young lady, and let us talk this matter over. I am now prepared to give you the particulars of the plot that Feltman has hatched against you and your brother."

"Oh, let me show you something first," cried Sadie, and she drew a telegram from her bag and handed it to Nick.

"Do nothing about mine. Refuse all offers. Great news. C. S."

So read the message, and Nick saw that it was sent from Chicago, and he knew the writer must be Clarence Studiford.

"What do you suppose he means?" asked Sadie Arnot eagerly. "I believe it must be good news he brings."

"I hope that Clarry proves himself a decent fellow," said Nick thoughtfully. "I am sure he has nothing to do with the Feltman Syndicate; as I am likewise almost certain that Philip Arnot is no longer in the combine. Your principal enemy is Jake Feltman."

"And what is that awful man trying to do with Charlie, I wonder?" asked Sadie.

"Sit down, and let me tell you," the detective observed, and for the next half hour he went carefully over the details of the scheme which had been arranged by Feltman to enable him to finally obtain the signatures of both the Arnots to a bill of sale of their holdings in the valuable mine.

"Oh, my poor brother!" gasped Sadie, at last. "He is in danger every minute that he does not know the real character of these friends he has made."

"He is not in danger, for I and my men will guard him," declared Nick.

"But if they take him away to-night, they may drug him, or poison him——"

"No. For they will not take him away," said Nick quietly. "I have a better plan than to let them do that."

"What is it?"

"Have you courage?"

"If it is needed to save Charlie, I will find the courage," declared Sadie Arnot vigorously.

"I believe you will," returned Nick, with some admiration. "Now, listen: I could easily smash Feltman's entire scheme, and without letting the matter go any farther. I am asking you to help me Miss Arnot, by allowing matters to take their course.

"To save you and your brother trouble, now that we know the complete plans of the syndicate, would be easy. At least, we could keep Feltman and his henchmen from doing your brother, or you, any harm.

"Nevertheless, that would not end the attempts of the scoundrels to best you in the future. I want them to commit an overt act. I want them to go so far that, not only will Feltman be in the police toils, but his friends in the syndicate will be glad to sell you their small holdings of stock in your mine to keep out of trouble themselves."

"But I couldn't buy their stock at any price!" cried Miss Arnot.

"I'll find the money for the purpose; and I guarantee they won't hold out for any fancy price," said Nick grimly.

"But if you wish to positively save Charlie from any danger, I will show you how to act to-night so as to make him safe."

"Tell me how!" she cried, clasping her hands.

Nick had her sit down beside him and, in a low voice, told her the plan he had conceived for thwarting Feltman. In other words, he was about to set a "back fire."

"If you are brave, it will work. Do you think you would make a passable actress?" he asked, finally.

"I—I don't know. I never was bitten by that idea," she admitted.

"You remember the play we saw the other night?"

"Yes, indeed! Although I did not enjoy much of it."

"But you watched the lady who played the dual part of *Marie Valois* and *Tully?*"

"Yes, indeed. And how well she played the man's part," cried Miss Arnot.

"Just step into the next room with Adelina," said Nick, "and try on the costume that you will find there. Let Adelina help you; she has learned well the art of make-up."

The two girls retired. In half an hour there was a knock on the door, and Nick, who had been busy writing, looked up and saw Sergeant Tonra entering the room. He was dressed as he did while acting in the show; but just at that moment he should be escaping from the Igorrote village in the big arena outside!

Then Nick saw the smiling face of Adelina at the door, too, and he realized that his plan was working better than he had thought possible. Sadie Arnot looked exactly like her brother, and when she was in his clothes their nearest friends could scarcely have told them apart!

"Well done!" cried the detective. "Come in and let me see you to better advantage."

The disguised girl came in blushing. Her figure was slight and supple; the uniform fitted her well, but not too closely. There was little to suggest the female figure, for Adelina had seen to that.

"Don't blush. You must darken her skin more, Adelina. You never saw her brother, so you do not know how tanned he really is—and he has been out of doors all summer, too. Now, let me see you walk, Miss Sadie."

The girl knew something about the military carriage of her brother, and she assumed it very easily. She evidently knew every trick and gesture of the so-called Sergeant Tonra, too.

In a short time Nick was satisfied that her carriage was well-nigh perfect. Remember, she was representing her twin brother, and it was almost as natural an identity for her as her own!

"You are going to do fine!" declared Nick finally. "I am sure the 'big show' in the arena to-night will be a grand success in more ways than one."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FINISH OF FELTMAN.

Perhaps Captain Jack inspired his performers with more than their usual enthusiasm on the evening of this day. The show went with zest from the start. The surprise of Sergeant Tonra's squad, the skirmish, and the capture of the Americans by the hillmen seemed like a real engagement. When the naked, shrieking savages disappeared in the jungle, dragging the men in khaki with them, the audience could scarcely listen with patience to the lecturer who filled in the time between the setting of this and the mountain scene with his talk upon the history and habits of the savages who had captured the troop of soldiers.

In the village of the mountaineers, Sergeant Tonra played his heroic part to perfection. The fever broke out among his men; he nursed them, he defended them from the cruelties of their oppressors, he recaptured his own personal arms, and planned the escape of his remaining men from the place of captivity.

Only the sergeant and one trooper were well enough at the last to make any attempt to fight. They overpowered the guards alone and stole the ponies, and so got away from the village while the bulk of the savages were engaged in the "head-hunter's dance."

In the front of the arena the jungle and meadows were still set, and the audience watched the little cavalcade winding down from the heights into this lowland—the mechanical effect being quite perfect. At last the party made camp in the mouth of the defile which appeared to debouch upon the lowlands, and it was there that Sergeant Tonra was himself stricken with the fever.

But one comrade remained alive. This part was played by a husky young fellow whom Nick had been looking up, through Patsy, during the past few hours. The detective found that the man had a police record, and during the winter was a saloon lounger about the Bowery in New York. His suspicions, therefore, were assured. This man was in the pay of Jake Feltman.

The man whose character he played had strapped the sergeant on a horse and had essayed to take him, unconscious with the fever that had smitten him, across the lowlands to the nearest army post. They had wandered about for several days, until the trooper himself was well-nigh spent, and were finally

discovered by a party of the native constabulary and the sergeant's brothers-in-arms.

The entire party hurried off through a clump of trees, and later a military scene was shown where the sergeant was recovered and was complimented by his superior officers.

The trooper kept charge of the man bound on the pony until the performers got back to the dressing rooms, which were behind the huge painted curtain which represented the background of mountain chain.

There was always a rush and scurry at this point. If the trooper had not unbound the sergeant when they were out of sight of the audience, there was nobody else to do it. Then both brushed up their uniforms to appear in the final parade.

Nick could not guide affairs on this important occasion, but he did so by proxy. Chick, in his khaki uniform, and Patsy, too, hovered near the sergeant and the trooper whom they knew was in Feltman's pay. In the camp in the ravine, where the sergeant was supposed to be stricken with fever, word was passed the sergeant that Captain Jack wanted him to step behind the scene a moment.

His absence did not delay the action of the piece. The trooper was bringing water from a spring, and he saw, as he supposed, the sergeant coming through the canvas screen again into the sight of the audience, to meet him at the spot where the main action of the scene took place.

The sergeant played his part seemingly as usual. He staggered as he came forward, leaned wearily against a tree trunk, and then, while the trooper was busily working about the camp, and talking cheerfully, the smitten hero fell forward unconscious.

It was done just as usual. The trooper seized him, half raised him up, and then forced his canteen between the sergeant's lips. Here the action of the piece came near being wrecked, for the sergeant spat out the mouthful of liquid, and the fumes reach him. The sergeant gritted his teeth.

"How dare you give me that stuff?" gasped the sergeant, in a low aside, but with emphasis.

"Huh? You've been takin' your snorter pretty regular before, 'bo," said the trooper, with a chuckle. "What's eatin' youse now?"

Then they went on with the play. The trooper strapped his comrade across the pony's back. And every once in a while he would thrust the canteen near the sergeant's nostrils so that the aroma would reach him. *The sergeant gritted his teeth.*

"What's the matter wit' you, 'bo, anyway?" demanded the trooper. "I never knowed you to refuse a snorter before."

There was no reply. The trooper started out from the mountain and crossed the plain. Suddenly he spied the moving constables and troops in ambush and believed he was surrounded by the enemy. He drew his gun and prepared to fight for his own and his sergeant's lives, when there was a good, hearty American cheer, and the troops burst out of concealment and surrounded the rescued pair.

The trooper led the pony in the midst of the band, as they marched away, and the performers crowded through the exit in the back drop. Instantly all was confusion there while the performers rushed to shift costumes and to line up for the final scene.

Suddenly the trooper went to the side of the pony upon which the sergeant's head hung down. Instead of unlashing his fellow player, he slipped a gag in his mouth and, with an oath, said:

"There, hang you!! If you'd taken yer medicine like yer should, I wouldn't have to have made you so blamed uncomfortable. But you *would* have it!"

The sergeant did not even struggle. The trooper seized the horse's bridle and, unnoticed in the confusion, trotted the animal to one of the outer exits of the show grounds.

It opened on a lane and was dark. But there were two men ready to receive the bound and gagged sergeant. The latter was quickly unstrapped from the pony, but his wrists were lashed tightly.

"Gif him to me, yet," grunted one of the men in the lane. "He iss a light weight—eh?"

"Shut your big mouth, Dutchy!" ejaculated Timmy, the Rat. "Sh! is that somebody coming?"

"Nefer mind. We get him to de ottermobile an' it iss all right."

The closely covered machine was standing at the end of the lane. Dutch Pete ran with the sergeant, and Timmy followed. As the trooper turned back with the pony he found himself confronting a man in khaki who put a very business-like looking gun at his head.

"You are my prisoner!" declared Chick Carter. "You open your head and I'll hand you something you won't like a little bit."

The cry the man would have uttered was smothered. The automobile party were not warned.

Dutch Pete got into the limousine with his burden, while Timmy took the seat beside the chauffeur. There

was another man inside the car, and he ordered the driver to "let her go."

The supposed Dutch Pete sat the supposed sergeant on the seat beside him and facing the other man. The first thing the disguised detective did was to remove the gag from the prisoner's mouth.

"What the devil did you do that for, Pete?" cried the man in charge of the affair, starting forward.

Dutch Pete, or, rather, Nick Carter, shot out his right hand and seized the other's throat. He shook him a moment as a terrier does a rat and then flung him back into the seat, making the springs groan again.

"You villain!" he cried. "I've got you where I want you at last."

"Nick Carter!" yelled the man. "I knew that Ducey lied."

"Well, Ducey is where lying won't help him a little bit for some time to come. And I'm going to put you where the dogs won't bite you, too. Jake Feltman, I've been trying to turn this trick for months. Now I've got you just where I want you."

"You have?" snarled the fence. "What can you prove against me?"

"I can prove you planned to kidnap Charlie Arnot, hold him in durance until his sister would agree to your terms about the mine, and you would have robbed them both. This was not only a plan; you began to execute it to-night, and here you are, caught red-handed."

"This fellow won't testify against me," declared Jake boldly, pointing at the supposed Charlie Arnot who had, thus far, kept quiet, being much out of breath and a good deal scared.

"Who do you suppose this is?" demanded Nick Carter.

"What's the matter with you? I know the fellow——"

With a quick movement Nick snatched off the cap that confined Sadie's hair, and it flowed down about her face and over her shoulders.

"Sold again, Jake!" he said delightedly. "Just as I have been fooling you in the guise of Dutch Pete, Miss Arnot has masqueraded to-night in her brother's habiliments. You have treated that poor lad shamefully. No! don't expect help from Timmy on the front seat there. Even the man driving you is not your own chauffeur. We got him an hour ago when you let him go to supper. My own chauffeur, Danny, is driving us, and, Mr. Jake Feltman, we are *on our way to police headquarters!"*

And that was the finish of the Feltman Syndicate—and particularly of Jake Feltman. Conspiracy and attempted kidnapping was proven against him and, in time, he was sent up to serve a term in prison for his wicked work. His helpers likewise receiver shorter terms for the same offense.

As for the men who had money in Feltman's mining stock combination, they suffered the chagrin of seeing the Arnot twins reopen the workings of their mine and make a mint of money out of it. These unscrupulous financiers were obliged by Nick to sell their stock in the Arnot mine at par to the twins, too. But greatly to Sadie's satisfaction, Philip Arnot had really gotten out of the whole unhappy business.

Clarry Studiford had discovered that, despite the reports to the contrary, the mine which had caused all the trouble was quite free of water. The water which had stood in the old workings so long had now begun to seep through into mines owned by the syndicate, and the cost of clearing the Arnot workings was very small indeed.

Studiford made himself so useful to the Arnots in the next few months that the brother and sister came quite to depend upon him. He proved himself, as Nick Carter had hoped, a fellow of good parts, after all, and it is very likely that, in time, Sadie Arnot will come to feel something warmer than friendship for Studiford.

As for Charles Arnot, he agreed, after this bad break, to go away from the city with his sister and really try to recover from the effect of his dissipation, and to be a man. And according to the present outlook it appears that he has been successful.

Dutch Pete, with a new suit of clothes and the hundred dollars Nick had promised him, left New York. The detective did not inquire where the thief was bound; all Pete said was:

"Vell, I'm on my vay yet! Undt efen if Shake Feltman iss in de chail, dis town von't be a healt'y spot for me. You haf treated me pretty white, Misder Carter, undt I t'ank you."

"You'd better treat yourself white, Pete," advised Nick. "Cut out the shady ways and walk in the sunshine. You won't be afraid, then, of Jake Feltman or any other man."

THE END.

The next number (674) will contain "The Dictator's Treasure; or, Nick Carter Nips the Honduran Plotters."

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MUTINY AT SEA.

King Ferdinand of Naples, finding his people growing more and more restless under the tyranny of his rule, sought to avoid all aggravating measures, lest he should incite a popular rebellion. He began to realize the weakness of his hold upon the throne, and so looked about him to allay, by any measure, the causes of irritation in the popular mind.

There were at this time confined in the dungeons of his capital over a hundred prominent political prisoners, most of whom had suffered there for a period of ten years. The offense of these victims of tyrannical vengeance was patriotism. The king, after consulting with his confidants, selected from out the list of these men sixty-six names, and orders were issued to banish them to America, it being feared that their long confinement in Neapolitan dungeons might incite to rebellion.

The king would have been glad to have had them executed at once, but he dared not do this, not only for the above reasons, but also lest he should bring down upon his head the indignation of the whole European world. So, as we have said, he adopted what was thought to be a judicious course of getting rid of these men, and they were therefore to be banished to this country. Even the carrying out of this measure required secrecy and care, lest it should arouse the popular indignation.

A dark night was selected, and these patriots, securely ironed, were embarked in a steamer and sent direct to Cadiz, in Spain, where they were put on board of the ship *David Stewart*, with the captain of which a bargain had been made to land the exiles in America, at so much per head.

The government, however, fearing that the captain of the ship should prove unfaithful to their interests and purpose, withheld one-third of the passage money until the service was duly performed.

Still further to insure the consummation of the plan, a Neapolitan war steamer towed the *David Stewart* to sea for a distance of over two hundred miles, when, after hauling alongside and reiterating his instructions, the officer who had been charged with the execution of the business then ordered the steamer to head for the Bay of Naples. The good ship *David Stewart* lay her course to the westward, and until the following day all was quiet on board.

We say all was quiet, yet there was one scene being enacted on board the transport ship with which the reader of this veritable account should be made acquainted. It was about the middle watch of the night, after the Neapolitan steamer left the ship, that the Italians, who were congregated in a sort of temporary cabin, which had been arranged for them amidships, were surprised by the appearance among them of a young stranger. He was wrapped in a long cloak, which, on being thrown open, discovered the dress of a common sailor. This mystery, however, was but brief in duration, for in a moment the newcomer walked up to one of the most distinguished of the prisoners, Luigi Lettembrini, and in a low voice, exclaimed: "Father!"

"My son!" exclaimed the aged patriot, after one moment of pause to assure himself.

And the two embraced each other, while the rest came close about them and mingled manly tears and hearty congratulations together.

"I am here in disguise and to serve you, my father, and all of you, my compatriots, as the agent of our friends in London. To-morrow my plans will be perfected. Be not surprised at whatever may occur. I cannot discuss matters now, for discovery would be ruin, and we may be watched at this very moment. I could not longer deny myself this happiness," he continued, again embracing his father. "Be silent and watchful."

"Silent and watchful," they repeated, in one voice.

It was a bright, clear day at sea, and the captain of the *David Stewart*, who had just "taken the sun," was working up his latitude and longitude. At this moment a dozen men walked coolly into the cabin, all armed with pistols, and headed by a young but determined fellow. The captain sprang to his feet in amazement, saying:

"What does this mean?"

"Captain Gorman, it means mutiny; but at the same time no harm to any one unless resistance is offered," was the answer of the leader.

"What do you complain of—what do you desire?" asked the captain excitedly.

"Hold, sir! You must not go for your pistols. We are all armed, and, if necessary, we shall shoot you on the spot," said the leader, seeing that the captain reached his hands toward a drawer in his cabin locker.

"What would you have?"

"Change the ship's course for Liverpool."

"For what object?"

"To land the Italians whom you have agreed to carry to America."

"I see; this is a political affair," he said.

"Entirely so," continued the leader. "No harm will occur to life or property if you comply."

"That I cannot do."

"That you must and shall do," was the cool answer.

"Never!" said the captain of the *David Stewart*.

"Boys," said the leader, "put these mandates on the man—he is no longer captain of the ship."

In vain did Captain Gorman resist and call aloud for his mates. They were already disposed of, and these fellows, who so quietly but implicitly obeyed their leader, were his own crew. He found himself locked into his inner cabin, and, for the present at least, kept in irons, while he could hear the orders issued on deck which put the ship about and headed her once more for the continent of Europe. He listened carefully, and saw that whoever was in command, and issuing these orders, was one who must be a thorough and practical seaman, and concluded that there was but one thing for him to do—namely, to make the best of the situation.

After the ship's course had been changed, her sails all properly trimmed, the watches set, and everything in order, the leader of the mutinous crew came below, and told the captain that he should like to have a little conversation with him.

"You seem to be master here; it is only for me to obey," was the bitter reply.

"There is no occasion for hard feelings, Captain Gorman. You shall lose nothing by this change."

"Call it mutiny, sir."

"Very well, by this mutiny," said the other. "You have already received two-thirds of the passage money for the patriots on board; the other third was to be paid on the completion of the contract."

"That is so. You seem to be thoroughly informed about the charter party of the *David Stewart*."

"I am. Now, captain, there need be no secret about this matter. On our arrival at Cork, whither I shall steer, you shall receive the balance of the money promised for the transportation of your passengers."

"You are very liberal," growled the captain.

"I am not only under the orders of the Italian society in London, but my father, Luigi Lettembrini, is one of the released prisoners now on board."

"What uniform do you wear?" asked the captain, observing the dress which the young leader of the mutiny now appeared in.

"That of first officer of the Galway line of steamers," was the frank reply.

He was doing duty with the rest of the crew forward in the dress of a common foremast hand until he had taken command of the ship, when he put on his regular suit, consisting of a blue frock, gilt buttons, gold cap band, and ornamented cuffs. The society in London had reliable friends in Naples, who kept it informed of all doings of the government, and, being supplied with the information of the proposed exiling of the prisoners, it had sent young Lettembrini, one of its sworn members, to carry out the plan he was now executing.

"Where do you propose to land?"

"Queenstown is the nearest port."

"True."

"You see, captain, your honor has been vindicated. You have been seized by superior numbers and put in irons."

"I have good reasons to know it," was the reply, as the captain looked at the handcuffs he wore.

"Give me your parole that you will in no way interfere with my purpose, and you are free."

"I cannot help myself," was the answer.

"Do you solemnly agree to this, Captain Gorman?" asked the young Italian.

"I do," he replied, after a few moments of silence. He felt he could do no better.

"I must take the liberty, however, to remove these," said the other, taking the captain's pistols from the drawer where they were kept; "and also this knife."

"I suppose so," said the captain resignedly.

"Are these all the arms on board?"

"To be honest with you, no," was the reply. "There are two dozen revolvers, an entire case, in the locker."

"Thank you, captain; I shall take them and pay you for them. They will be distributed among your passengers, who will use them, if necessary, and without hesitation."

Saying which he produced a key and unlocked the irons upon the captain's wrists, and offered him his hand in amity. The honest commander of the *David Stewart* began, in spite of himself, to like the straightforward young mutineer, and in his secret heart to sympathize with his purpose. After all, he would be no pecuniary loser, he was in no way implicated, and was pretty sure of a quick dispatch to the United States from some English port.

Captain Gorman was from that hour treated with all possible respect, and he in no way interfered with the working of the ship. The two mates, taking pattern after their superior, adopted the same plan of conduct.

Upon landing at Queenstown the enthusiastic Italians fell upon their knees and kissed the ground upon which they trod, as freemen rescued from the clutch of the tyrant. Here they were met by an agent of the society in London, who freely compensated Captain Gorman, his mates, and the crew of the ship, for all damages, real or constructive.

Of those gallant and brave sixty-six patriots, fifty not long afterward were to be found in the ranks of Garibaldi's army, which liberated the Neapolitan people and confirmed the liberal monarch Victor Emmanuel upon the throne of United Italy.

THE HARVEST OF THE ICE.

No one who has only seen in summer the great river St. Lawrence roll down its vast green flood for a thousand miles to the Atlantic waves can fully picture that same majestic river as it lies powerless in the relentless clutch of the Canadian winter.

The beautiful Canadian "fall," with its witchery of wondrous tints, is faded and gone. November comes. Then one day the frost touches the river, and, half paralyzed, yet with swift current fighting for freedom, the St. Lawrence pushes seaward under an ever-increasing burden of loose, thin cakes of ice.

November ends, and the last vessels have fled from Montreal and Quebec, the loose ice rattling against their sides as they drop downstream. The buoys are taken up, and steadily from either bank the area of solid surface grows farther into the stream. And one day the last rebellious ripple is subdued to the ice yoke, and from coast to coast St. Lawrence lies fast bound in fetters that will grow ever firmer and stronger as the winter advances, till—as was actually done a few winters ago in Montreal—you can run a service of loaded railway trains across the two miles from bank to bank.

The ice is not smooth, and to skate upon it, except in a few spots occasionally cleared, would be an utter impossibility. The constant flow of the swift current, aided by the heavy falls of snow, piles the ice and snow together in great jagged hummocks, often ten to twenty feet in height, over the surface of the river, which thus presents a vast white waste of rugged crystal, beautiful, fascinating, yet terrible in its desolate blankness.

The winter deepens. In the city, wheeled vehicles are put away in the stables, and the long, white avenues are all a-tinkle with the music of the sleigh bells. From trotting "rig" to pantechnicon, all traffic now goes on runners.

The ice thickens slowly on the river, and ere Christmas

comes it has reached the ten inches needed for the sure support of loaded vehicles. Then winter roads are cleared across the ice from the island of Montreal to St. Lambert, on the south side of the great Victoria Bridge, and to other places across the river, and the fur-clad habitant can bring his produce to the city markets.

Thicker and thicker yet grows the ice; lower and lower drops the thermometer, till it will show twenty and more degrees below zero. But while the public at large draw furs low over their freezing ears, and, notwithstanding rubbers, go sliding and falling about on the ice-caked, hilly sidewalks, one class of the community rubs hands of self-congratulation.

These are the ice merchants.

When the freezing wind blows the dry snow dust about in clouds, so that you cannot say, without examining the sky, whether it is snowing hard or not, then the ice merchant is happy. For it means that the ice harvest will be good.

Very important to Montreal is this ice harvest. Two thousand workmen are engaged in the work every year, and from the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa, in the meeting place of which mighty streams lies the island of Montreal, about two million tons of ice are annually extracted. About a quarter of a million tons are exported to our own States; the remainder—equivalent to an allowance of about six tons per head of the population—is stored for the use of the city in the broiling heats of summer.

Not many persons would envy the ice harvester his work, or feel any anxiety to assist him in "bringing in the sheaves" on the long wooden sleighs which, with their crystal burden, are such a frequent spectacle in Montreal streets in winter.

The two principal harvest fields are on the right bank of the St. Lawrence before Longueuil, and on the Ottawa at a suburb called Verdun. There the ice harvesters work, exposed to the full bitterness of the freezing wind as it blows over the wide expanse of the frozen river.

The first step in the operations is to clear the harvest field of the loose snow by means of a machine not unlike the great "sweepers" that make the streets passable after a heavy snowstorm. Then, with the aid of a horizontal saw, that acts on the ice as a plow does on land, and is drawn in the same way by a horse and steered by a plowman, furrows a couple of feet apart are traced. In order to preserve an exact spacing between the furrows, the plow is provided with a guide hook, which keeps clutch of the next furrow.

The furrows mark the width of the blocks which are to be cut.

When the surface of the ice field has been thus lined in one direction, other furrows are made at right angles, this time at intervals of three and a half feet, to mark the length of the blocks. The entire field is thus marked off in rectangles of three and a half by two feet.

The first plow cuts the ice to a depth of some four inches, but afterward a larger plow is drawn over the same tracks, and the teeth of this one bite down another eight or nine inches, so that the furrows have altogether a depth of rather over a foot.

The next business is to secure the blocks thus cut without chipping them or spoiling their looks. At this stage one of the harvesters comes forward to the air hole from which he is to start operations, and with a monstrous handsaw, worked perpendicularly with both hands, he proceeds to cut loose the blocks in lengths of nine or ten each. With a push from a long pole he sends these down the current toward the basin, close at hand, that has been cleared for collecting the blocks.

The huge weapon with which he works gives this honest fellow a kind of Bluebeard appearance. A novice, watching him, would say that ice hewing is easier work than sawing wood. Yet the operation of cutting these blocks is really far more trying than wood sawing, partly because the worker in ice must give so long a stroke to his saw, and partly because of the pitiless, freezing wind, that congeals his very sweat as he toils.

A stranger unused to some of the curious phenomena to which the intense cold of the Lower Canadian winter gives rise would be not a little surprised to see the surface of the open water thus cleared on the river giving off clouds of steam. The steam is so undoubted and distinct, as it is wafted this way and that with the wind, that the impression is almost irresistible that the water at that point must in some remarkable way have become suddenly heated. Yet the blocks of ice that the muffled harvesters are dragging out are two feet thick, if an inch!

The explanation is, that cold as is the current underneath—possibly even many degrees below freezing point—the cold at the surface is so much more intense that the vapor from the water thus suddenly exposed to it is immediately congealed into visibility.

Arrived in the basin, the long blocks of ice are steered toward an inclined plane that slopes down into the water. Grappling irons are fixed round them, and they are drawn by horses out of the water onto a wooden platform, raised to the exact level of the low sleighs which are to carry the blocks of ice to the ice houses. A few well-directed blows from a crowbar break up the long ice block, ere it is loaded on the sleigh, into the smaller cubes originally marked out. Then the harvesters grip the blocks with great pincers, and draw them onto the sleigh, to the number of about a dozen blocks, or a load of between four thousand two hundred and sixty and four thousand five hundred pounds to each sleigh.

Let us follow one of these laden sleighs, as it makes its musical way, with its beautiful burden, clear as emerald, through the snow-covered streets of the city. The ice houses where the blocks are stored during the hot months of summer are huge wooden chambers of some ninety feet in length, by about thirty feet wide and thirty feet high. Their walls are double, and the space between the two walls on each side is filled with sawdust, in order to render the interior as nearly as possible temperature proof, and to preserve the precious contents against the heat of summer.

Each ice house is filled right up to the top with blocks brought from the sleighs, which are slid down inclined planes and along the floor, till each crystal layer makes a closely packed new floor surface. The upper lays are filled by raising the blocks on elevators from the ground level and repeating the same process.

But at last the long, hard winter of Lower Canada draws to a close, and the ice harvesters abandon the river. "Soft" days, as the Canadians call a thaw, grow frequent. Then, indeed, Montreal, with its wooden sidewalks and its mud, is a good place to stay away from.

At last the day comes when the great St. Lawrence, long chafing in its crystal bonds, swells with the flowing of the waters of spring, and bursts into freedom again. Crash! Ever and anon may be heard the snapping of his fetters.

Now is the time of the "ice shove," when the struggling current pushes on one side the masses of ice and snow, piling them house-high along the bank, where athletic young Montrealers clamber up on the glistening pinnacles, and are photographed for the benefit of the next summer's tourists.

A few weeks more, and the warm spring sun has melted the last snow patch. The majestic river rolls once more freely on its way, and all along its banks, by hill and meadow, mountain and forest and farm, "Our Lady of the Snows" puts on, with a swiftness unknown in other lands, that bright green mantle of the spring which, even to those who have seen it year after year for a generation, is a never-failing wonder and delight.

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